

L E C T U R E S  
UPON  
THE MOST REMARKABLE  
CHARACTERS *and* TRANSACTIONS  
RECORDED IN THE  
BOOK OF GENESIS.

By the Rev. J. MURRAY, of *Newcastle.*

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*Search the Scriptures. John v. 39.*

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V O L. II.

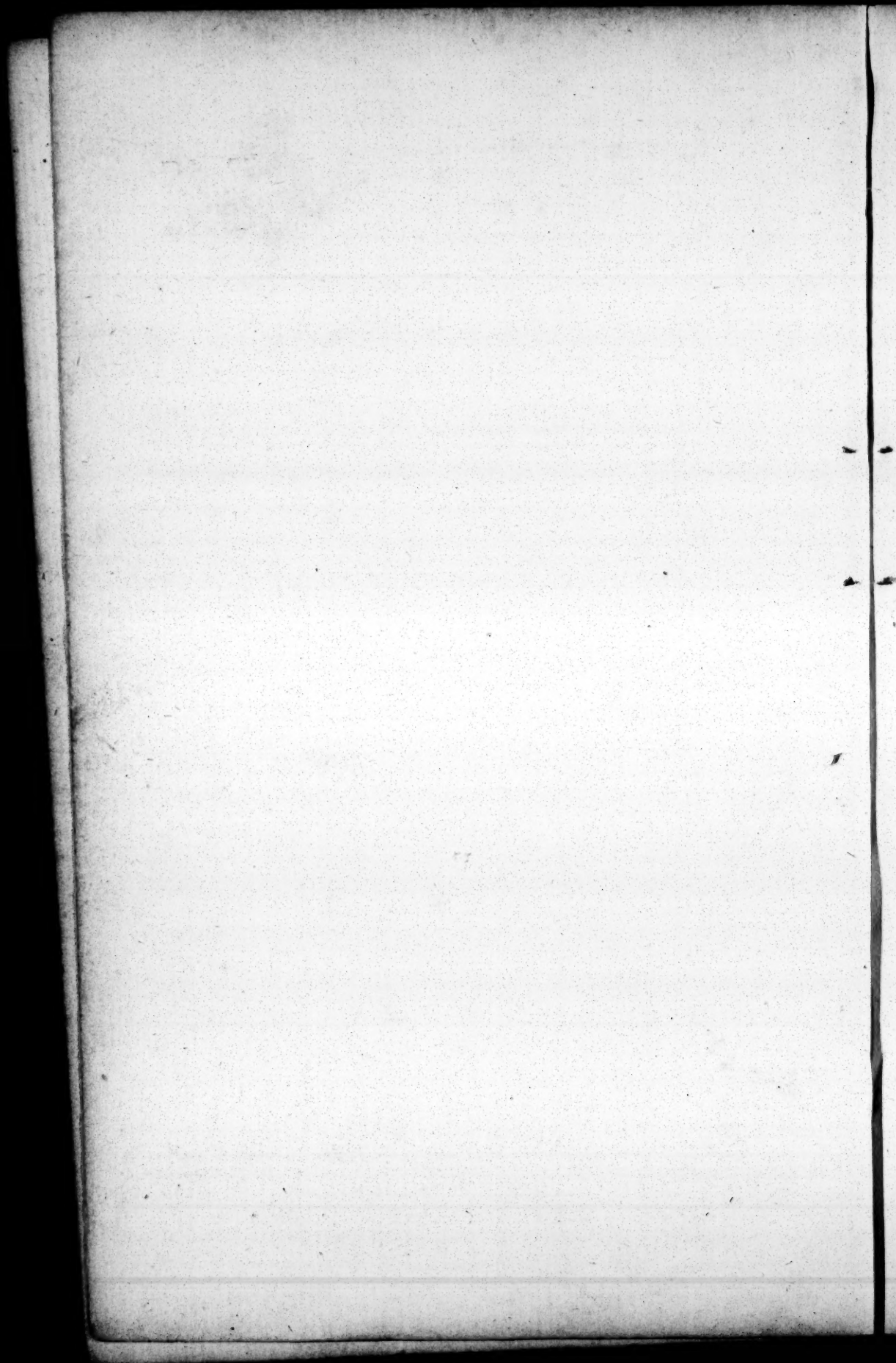
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## LECTURE X.

*Concerning ABRAHAM's going to the Land of the Philistines.—His second denying of his Wife.—ABIMELECH's Dream.—SARAH and ABRAHAM's Reproof.—What is understood by a Covering of the Eyes? &c.*

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GENESIS, XX. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c.

*And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesb and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.*

*And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister: And Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.*

*But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken: for she is a man's wife.*

*But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation, &c.*

**I**F those days of novel writing, the story of *Abraham* going to the land of the Philistines, and the adventure which happened to him there, would be the ground work, of a tedious and insipid romance,—but Moses has finished the whole in a short narrative



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rative, which, at the same time, comprehends all the facts, and makes a complete and circumstantial story. The doctrine of *Episodes* was not then in fashion, and the sacred writer hastened forward to truth, without standing still to *chat by the way*, like *children* in the market place; or like a *Greek* or *Roman* fabulist, repeating his *drama* to his friends *in the corners of the streets*. This xxth chapter of Genesis, in the hands of some prolific genius, would have made two tolerable duodecimo volumes, fit for any tea-table of this kingdom.

It is said that Abraham journeyed towards the south-country, and sojourned in Gerar, between *Kadesb* and *Shur*. This was south, in respect of Mamre, where he had staid for some time, and then belonged to Abimelech, the king of the Philistines. In after times it was a part of the possessions of the *seed of Abraham*, and belonged to the *tribe of Simeon*. It only belonged to Abraham at this time, by promise, but the time for taking possession was not yet come; he was only a stranger and a sojourner in the land which his posterity was afterwards to receive for a possession. He therefore behaved like a *pilgrim* and *stranger*, and took nothing, except what he obtained *by leave*, from those who were in possession of the country.

In those lands where Abraham came, they seem all to have been infected with one disease, or under the governing power of the *same sin*. An *inordinate desire for women*, appears to have been predominant among the *Philistines*, as well as amongst the *Egyptians*; for Abraham was obliged to use the same shift at Gerar, that he used when he went  
down

down to Egypt. He denied his wife, and said, she was his sister. It is something strange, that he would have had occasion to be affraid of his life for a woman of *ninety years of age*; for so old was Sarah at this time, when her and her lord went down to Gerar. Some have affirmed, that a woman of ninety years of age, was equal to one of forty, in our times, and that Sarah and Abraham were remarkable for continence, which preserved their constitution and beauty. There appears to have been something in this; for we do not hear in the whole history of Abraham, that he sought after women for any other design, than that of having children; and that it was with that design that Sarah gave him her maid Hagar. As this is one of the principal intentions of marriage, there is reason to conclude, that if the desires of enjoyment were confined to this object, there would not be so many *taudry* constitutions among both males and females. As for lascivious intercourse among unmarried persons, or libidinous commerce before marriage, it was such a disgrace, among the ancients, that it was not to be suffered. The sons of Jacob had such a sense of the dishonour done to their sister Dinah, in the case between her and Shechem, that they did not think marriage a sufficient compensation for the disgrace that was done her, and therefore resented it in the severest manner. There is one thing observable in the case of the ancients, they were generally *men* before they had intercourse with the *sex*, and did not waste their constitution with *early concupiscence*. They were not like the *boys* of the present

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age, who are scarcely out of their grammar before they have been *three* or *four* times in the hands of the *surgeon* on account of the *Neopolitan disorder*. It is this that makes so many *wan complexions*, *slender constitutions*, and *sickly nerves*, among the young people of the present generation.

Abraham undoubtedly equivocated, when he said, *Sarah is my sister*; he told the truth, but not the *whole truth*. In this we shall not pretend to vindicate him; the same Providence that had hitherto preserved him, could have taken care of him without this piece of finesse, and low cunning.— He found after, that it was more the goodness of God, and his Providence that preserved him and his wife, than his own sagacity, or any scheme he had devised. The patriarch had undoubtedly good reason to be affraid, and he gives a sufficient reason for his fear; he perceived that the fear of the Lord was not in that place. This was enough to have put any man in fear, where he knew the appetites were strong, and the desires boundless. You have no security for either life or property, where the fear of God does not bind men. The fear of death will not always restrain wicked men from committing injuries, when they have no fear of an after account to settle. No government is safe, nor will any laws bind those who have not the fear of God before their eyes, There is nothing so dangerous to society as infidelity, or want of the sense of religion. The fear of the Lord is the surest basis of government, and the best security of mens lives and properties. Experience may teach us, that the  
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ABRAHAM'S *second denying of his Wife.*

first acts of injustice and immortality, proceed from neglecting the practices of religion. As long as there is a sense of the presence of God, upon mens minds, they will restrain their appetites, and rule their passions, as creatures responsible for their behaviour, but when the sense of the divine presence forsakes them, they are fit for all sorts of wickedness. Abraham well knew, that if the Philistines did not fear God, they would not hesitate to take away his life, rather than not enjoy his wife. No man will commit adultery, with the presence of God before his eyes; it is where such grave ideas are not objects of the mind, that men run headlong into all wickedness. Societies and governments, that would preserve the rights of all individuals, or indeed of any, ought to make it their particular study, to promote the knowledge and the love of God. This will be of more service than volumes of laws, or legions of soldiers. Without the fear of the Lord, laws are no more than arbitrary mandates of state, and standing armies *troops of oppressors,—an hired banditti*, to defend the *vile* against justice, and to *oppress the righteous*. Both the *Canaanites*, and the *Philistines* were driven out of their land; for not fearing the Lord. It was the *want of this* that brought a train of other sins, and along therewith a train of other evils, that issued in their total overthrow. In the days of Abraham their cup of iniquity was filling, but was not come to the full; at last they proceeded so far in sin, that the land *spued* them out, and left them *neither root nor branch*. There is a certain pitch of wickedness that nations arrive at, that never escapes punishment. When  
unnatural



unnatnral crimes are not punished by government,—when lasciviousness is winked at, and when it is not accounted a reproach for men to be wicked, in such a case some public calamity is nigh, *even at the door*. It is not all at once that a people turn wicked; sin advances by degrees, its motions, at first, are slow and imperceptible; but as it advances, the shame thereof decreases, till it comes to that height, that it is even accounted a want of taste, for men not to sin like their neighbours. There are periods, when those whose *office* and *situation* obliges them to *expose sinners*, that they may be ashamed, employ their influence, and discharge their office in *covering iniquity*, and *skreening offenders*. It is not to be wondered at, that the *Philistines* and *Amorites*, should have been guilty in this respect, when we find, in countries where the Christian religion is professed, the very *wardens of the churches*, and the *overseers of parishes*, are careful in covering the sins of people of condition, and for a little money, will wink hard at fornication and adultery. They are only sinners of the lower class that are exposed to shame for their iniquity.

Abraham having settled matters between him and Sarah his wife, went to Gerar, and they had scarcely got time to settle there, till Abimelech took Sarah into his house. It was with no virtuous design that he did this, though he says he did it out of the integrity of his heart. This, at least, proves that he thought polygamy no crime, and that he might gratify his lusts according to his desires. It had all the appearance of *arbitrary power*, even to take a man's sister, without some previous sollicita-

tion to obtain her consent. We do not hear that Abimelech used any ceremony to obtain Sarah's good will, nor did he at all advise with him whom he thought was her brother. It is said, *that he sent and took her*. Perhaps to encrease his seraglio, without any intention to make her his wife. This was arbitrary and unjust; there was more of the behaviour of the *monarch* than of a *good magistrate* in this. It is dangerous to lodge *too much* power in any one hand, for unless there be proper checks in the way of extensive power, it will be a thousand to one, if he who executes it, does not *stretch his commission*.

Divine Providence has always, *sooner or later*, appeared in behalf of the innocent. There is an *universal theocracy* which extends to all the world, and the kingdoms that are in it, which, though it is not so miraculous and visible, as that of the Jews, yet it never fails to punish the wicked, and relieve the righteous and oppressed. Before there was an *universal revelation of the will of God to men*, given as in the writings of *Moses* and *the prophets*, and in *the New Testament*, the immediate exertions of divine Providence were more striking, and punishments for great crimes were more summary, and sudden. Both Jews and Heathens experienced the truth of this observation. Punishments have since been more slow, not so visible, yet still as certain, and in the conclusion equally *awful*. In the days of Abraham, we find that Providence interposed in a summary and immediate manner, *in punishing Abimelech*, and preserving the chastity of Sarah, Abraham's wife. It is said, *that Jehovah appeared*

to *Abimelech* in a dream, and threatened him for taking another man's wife. In those early ages of the world, visions and divine revelations, were not confined merely to such as feared the Lord, but were frequently made to others, to restrain them from doing the evil they intended to do. What sort of images or phantoms were presented to their imagination, may be conjectured from the visions that were made to *Pharoah*, and *Nebuchadnezzar*. They seem to have been emblematical representations of facts, which, though they were not exactly similar to the things which happened, yet they agreed in so many particulars, that they served to suggest to the minds of those, to whom they were revealed, that something extraordinary was to happen. It is not unlikely that, on this occasion, *Jehovah* spake to the king of the Philistines; and in words put him in mind of his danger. The greatest part of the evils that have happened to kings, nations and kingdoms, have, in general, proceeded from their unruly lusts and appetites. One would think, that as men are endowed with *reason* and *conscience*, that they would differ widely from other animals, in pursuing the gratification of their *appetites* and *passions*; that they would consult their understanding, and ask their own consciences how far it was safe to proceed:—and there is no reason to doubt, that if men would listen early to the voice of *reason* and *conscience*, but the mind would become governour of the passions and appetites, and never pursue them but for moral reasons; for it is certainly *as natural* for men to have *reason*, as to have *lusts* and *appetites*. Yet we find in some parts of  
the



of the world, and even in nations called Christian, that the men are really as unruly as the beasts, and a great deal worse. They frequently offer as an apology for their lasciviousness, that such desires are natural to them ; but why is not reason and conscience as natural ? The one is as much a part of our nature as the other, and, provided the dictates of the one were pursued as anxiously as the other, they would rule as powerfully. It is strange that it should be so natural to men to be beasts, and not natural to them also to be men. There is not a filthier creature upon the face of the globe than an unchaste and impure man or woman : the whole of this lyes in the mind ; for, if the mind was pure, it would soon bring all the appetites into subjection.

Abimelech says, that he took Sarah out of the integrity of his heart : And the Almighty says, that he knew that he did it out of the integrity of his soul, but this must be understood, that he did not know that she was Abraham's wife, which was undoubtedly true. But what had he to do with her at all ? It argued a loose and depraved disposition to fancy every woman he saw. There is no end of ungovernable lusts and affections ; every new object has something engaging, and the desires never say they have enough. Abimelech was not the only man about his court that was guilty in this particular ; it appears to have been a general practice, for the punishment was universal among the servants as well as upon the master ; which would not have been just, unless the servants had approved of their master's practices. It is a very com-



mon thing for people about a king's court to imitate the sovereign more in his vices than his virtues. In the article of keeping of mistresses, the courtier frequently exceeds the king. But his example goes a great way. The Philistines were partakers of their master's crimes, and were now made sharers of his punishment. Were punishments for sins of this sort rendered as visible now as they were in the days of Abimelech, what a sad outcry would there be heard in some places of the world. It is said, that the Lord closed up all the wombs in the family of Abimelech. This could not have been known so soon; there was more in this affair than is implied in this sentence. There was more probably, some particular distemper inflicted upon both males and females in the house and family of Abimelech. The closing of the womb cannot here be understood of barrenness; for, in such a short time, it could not have been known whether they were barren or not; and, therefore, the closing of the womb must have a respect to some distemper, which was inflicted upon the house of Abimelech, on account of those inordinate desires which they gratified beyond all measure and bounds. There are scarcely, in all the history of mankind, any punishments so extraordinary and remarkable as those that have been inflicted upon men for pursuing carnal appetites.

When the king of the Philistines was informed of the cause of his and his people's disorder, he took the true method to be delivered from it. He restored to Abraham his wife, and recompensed him for the injury he had done him, with rich and liberal presents.

presents. He, at the same time, sharply reprov'd the patriarch for his desimulation, and told him, he had done deeds to him that ought not to have been done. Abraham certainly did not behave uprightly upon this occasion, and there can be no other apology made for him, but that which he makes for himself,—that he perceived that the fear of God was not in that place. This was as severe reproof to Abimelech, as the other was to Abraham. Abimelech did not at all answer to the signification of his name; his name signifies a *father king*, because *kings ought to be like parents to their subjects*. But this prince appears neither to have feared God himself, nor have shewn it to be a duty to his subjects so to do. He was more concerned in gratifying his lusts and appetites, than in serving God. If princes only but considered their own interest, they would, above all things, endeavour to have the fear of God inculcated among their subjects. This is the surest basis of government; without it every throne must shake, and every crown totter. *It is righteousness that exalts a nation, but sin is the reproach of every people.*

Among those presents which Abimelech gave to Abraham, he gave *a thousand pieces of silver, to be a covering of the eyes to Sarah*. This was a pretty sum to buy a veil. Sarah, as a *married woman*, ought to have worn a veil, and then the king would have known that she was Abraham's wife; he therefore gave her this present by way of reproof, and also to shew, that as Abraham accepted of the present, he believed that his wife's chastity was untouched. This sum, which was given to

Sarah, was equal in value to fifty-six pounds of our money, and, in those times, was a very genteel present. Abimelech called Abraham Sarah's brother, by way of sarcasm, because he assumed that title, and his wife gave it to him. *I have given thy brother, says he, a thousand pieces of silver, that is to be a covering of the eyes to thee; thus she was reproved.* It was no recommendation of Sarah's modesty, nor any proof of Abraham's faith, when they contrived this stratagem; and if the Almighty had not been more merciful than they were righteous, this might have been a scheme attended with very bad consequences.—But as the king's heart is in the hands of the Lord, and he can turn it as rivers of waters wheresoever he pleases; so he did on this occasion, and made Abraham find favour in the sight of Abimelech; for he gave him flocks and and herds, and men servants and women servants, and sent him away much richer than when he came.

There is something very particular in Abraham's speech in this chapter, where he makes his apology for calling his wife his sister. He says, *When Elohim caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, this is the kindness which thou shalt shew me at every place whither we shall come, say of me, he is my brother.* This kind of stile, in the Old Testament, is very common, when applied to God. *Elohim*, a plural name, is joined with a verb in the singular number. It is plain, when the Hebrews used this manner of speech, that they had but one single object in their view, and did not mean that there were more Gods than one, but they certainly had some peculiar signification in this kind



kind of expression. It is well known that this word, in the Hebrew, has a *singular*, as well as a *plural* number, and is used in the singular as well as in the plural number, but why it should be generally joined to a *singular verb* when it is used to point out the *Deity* is not so easily understood. There is one thing that appears very plain, and that is, that the scripture has all along been careful to teach the unity of God, and to lead the minds of men from all suppositions of more Gods than one. But why *Alah* or *El* might not have been used instead of *Elohim* both to preserve the rules of grammar, and to remove every suspicion of a *plurality of Gods*, seems to be the question? It will be dangerous to say too much on this subject; but this much may be said with safety,—that however *simple* the character of *Jehovah* is, and however much *he is one*, there are as many distinct views given of his *merciful* and *powerful* relations to men, as are sufficient to satisfy and entertain all the desires or wants of their *immortal souls*. By comparing one passage of holy scripture with another, we will find *three peculiar sorts of expressions applied to God*.—There is *Jehovah*,—the *angel Jehovah*,—and the *spirit Jehovah*. In Gen. xv. 1. the word of *Jehovah* is said to come to Abraham. In Gen. xxii. 11. the *angel Jehovah* is said to have called to Abraham out of heaven. In Isaiah lxi. 1. the *spirit Jehovah* is said to be upon the *Messiah*. This is such a peculiar kind of phraseology that it implies some very remarkable *unity* and *distinction*. What this *unity* and *distinction* are, I shall leave to some others to determine. Whoever the scriptures call *Jehovah*, I shall call by the



*same name*, and apply the *same attributes* to that *object*, as far as I can understand them.— But to enquire into modes of the divine nature beyond what the word of God points out, I shall industriously avoid, as much *as possible*.

We are informed that Abraham was a prophet, and had the power of blessing, and bestowing benedictions. The Lord commands Abimelech to restore his wife, and Abraham would pray for him, and he should live. This shews that Abraham was a greater man than Abimelech; for the lesser, as the apostle informs us, is blessed of the greater. Whether Abraham was a prophet in the strict sense of the word, I will not pretend to say, but as he had authority to bless, he was endowed with one part of the prophet's commission and spirit,—and we find he actually exercised it.

The Hebrews understood the word prophecy not only to signify *the fortelling and declaring future events*; but also they meant by it *oratory and public teaching*. Whosoever made a public speech, and taught by authority, was called (*Nabiah*) a prophet. Prayers, benedictions, and all religious discourses, were comprehended under the term *prophecy*: Even under the New Testament, the *preaching of the Gospel* is, by the apostles, called prophecy. *But he that prophesieth speaketh to edification, and exhortation, and comfort* \*. This is to be understood of a plain, easy, intelligible discourse, or making the prophecies plain to those who did not before understand them. Abraham was a prophet in both senses of the word (*Nabiah*); for  
thought

\* 1 Cor. xiv. 3.

though he did not act as *a public prophet*, declaring things to come, yet *future things were revealed to him*, and things of the greatest importance that ever were revealed to the world. He was also a public teacher and instructor of his family in the fear of God, and so deserved the name of a *prophet*. Abraham appears to have been as much *superior* to the king of the Philistines, as the king of Salem was superior to him. The patriarch, as a prophet, blessed *Abimelech*, and *Melchizedeck*, as a *priest* and *king*, blessed *Abraham*. Before the coming of Christ, *public blessings* were bestowed in the channel of *divine offices*, which offices were fulfilled in the *Messiah*,—who now has the sole power and authority of pronouncing blessings upon the sons of men.

For the sake of some of my audience, who are fond of parallels and comparisons, I shall finish this discourse by shewing in a few particulars in what respects Abraham was *a type of Jesus Christ*.

1. Abraham, by a special appointment of God, was called to go out into a country which was his own, by promise, but in which he was to be only a pilgrim and stranger, and in all the days of his sojourning he was to claim no property in the land of Canaan. Thus he went from place to place, having no certain habitation.—Jesus says of himself, *the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not any where to lay his head*. All the universe belonged to Jesus by right, and also by promise, but while he tabernacled among men, he put in no claim, but lived like a sojourner and a pilgrim. He claimed no earthly honours nor prerogatives, he coveted no riches nor wealth

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wealth. Even what all men in general, are fond of, he frequently gave up. *He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.* Abraham, all the while he sojourned in Canaan, sustained only the humble character of a stranger, a shepherd, and keeper of cattle; his real importance was not known by the inhabitants of the land, nor did he endeavour to be known, as a person of great consequence. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ never appeared in the days of his flesh, in that splendour that the world always did, and always do expect from such a personage. The people in that age were not much different from what mankind are still. All mankind are fond of having *temporal glory* joined with the idea of a *saviour* and *salvation*;—they are fond of *Virgil's* rules of comparison. *Sic parvis componere magna solebam.* They are so accustomed to *compare great things to small, or worldly things with things that are heavenly and spiritual*, that when heavenly things do not answer to their ideas of comparison, they despise them, as the Jews did *Jesus Christ*. Had Christ in the days of his flesh, made it his study to have revealed his *glory* to the rabbies and priests, and kept it a *secret* among the common people; had he never gone abroad but with a *regiment of priests and lawyers at his back*, with this motto upon his *phylactery*, ODI PROFANUM VULGUS ET ARCEO. *I hate the common people, and drive them away*; all the rabbies of the nation would have extolled him, and cried *hossannah* to the son of David. But when they saw him bestowing his favours and displaying his power, in the presence and company of poor fisher-men, and preaching



preaching the gospel to the poor of all ranks, they soon found that there was *some secret* in his behaviour, which did not favour them, and would not tally with their desires of *temporal glory and dignity*. Abraham did not at all look like a prince, or one that was heir to the promise of Canaan; none of the nations where he sojourned ever viewed him in that point of light, otherwise it is probable they would not have behaved so kindly towards him.

2. The promises concerning the earthly Canaan, were made first to Abraham, and through him to his seed and posterity, — *to thy seed will I give the land*, says *Jehovah*. Thus the right upon which the Israelites entered into Canaan, was the promise made to Abraham. In like manner every believer's right to the *heavenly Canaan and inheritance*, is found upon the promise made to the *Messiah*, as *the head of his church*, as *he in whom all the promises are*, yea, and in him, *amen to the glory of God*. In the history of Israel we have often mention made of the promise made to Abraham, and of the oath made to Isaac; it was on account of *God's holy covenant of promise*, made to Abraham, that he so long spared that wicked and ungrateful people. And it is owing to the gracious promise made to the *Messiah*, that he shall see of the travel of his soul, and be satisfied, that many persons who behave unworthily are preserved till some merciful opportunity happens, and saves them from destruction.

3. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. In this he was a most eminent type of Christ, whose faith is true righteousness, and the very foundation of our accep-

tance with God. The apostle to the Gallatians affirms that *we are justified by the faith of Jesus Christ, yea, that we believe in Christ, that we may be justified by the faith of Christ* \*. Abraham, as the father of the faithful, was a type of him whose faith is imputed to righteousness, both to him and all his seed. There is a peculiarity in the Hebrew text, which I have never seen taken notice of by any writers or commentators, upon this subject. In Gen. xv. 6. it is said, *he believed in the Lord, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*. The words are, *ve-heemin ba-Jehovah, va-jashebah*. He caused him to believe in Jehovah, and he imputed righteousness unto him. Both these are sovereign acts of God, for he both caused Abraham to believe, and he imputed righteousness to him. What is said in the 5th verse, confirms this sentiment; for it is said, *And he brought him forth abroad, and said, look towards heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said, so shall thy seed be. And he caused him to believe in Jehovah, and imputed righteousness unto him*. The apostle, when speaking of the same subject, Rom. iv. 3. says, *Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for the sake of, or on account of, righteousness* εἰς δικαιοσύνην. The Greek word ληίζω signifies to mark down or appoint something, or privilege to a person, for such and such considerations; and the true consideration, on account of which sinners receive faith or power to believe is righteousness.—*It is given to you, says the apostle, on account of Christ, to believe* \*. Faith, as an act of the mind, would be the same as  
a work

\* Gall. ii. 16.

† Phil. i. 29.

a work of the law, and if faith and righteousness were the same thing, our acceptance with God would depend upon our believing, which is as much a work as any other act of the human soul. The imputation of righteousness is a free act of God's grace, as well as the non imputation of guilt, and faith is a gracious privilege, bestowed upon the ungodly, for the sake of the finished work of the Redeemer. God does not justify men when they are believers, but when they are ungodly; and it is his free act of justifying mercy that founds their title and claim to all the privileges of the sons of God. I know it is said, and with no ill intention to the doctrines of grace, that faith is the instrument of our justification. But their is, perhaps, more *good meaning* than *good sense* in this opinion. The question is, Who is it that works with an instrument in the justification of the ungodly? It cannot be the ungodly man himself; for it is God that justifies, and for reasons, none of which are found in the ungodly, before justification. Believing in God, and professing and practising faith, may indeed justify us before the world, but in the sight of God there is something more perfect required, and it is wholly a foreign righteousness, by which we are justified in the sight of God. Abraham, as the head of a promised seed, was undoubtedly a type of the Messiah, and as his faith is mentioned with so much approbation, it may be accounted a type of that faith of Jesus Christ, which was the principle of all his righteousness.

4. The seed of Abraham were a miraculous production.—His wife was, according to the course of



nature, past child-bearing, and he himself was an hundred years old. The promise became good for all: The seed of Christ or his people are all brought forth in a supernatural manner.—The apostle to the Gallatians says of himself, and *all believers, we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise* \*. It is really as surprizing to bring men out of darkness into God's marvellous light, as for a woman of ninety years of age to have a son. It has never been found in experience, that *ungodly* men have become *righteous* by pursuing the ordinary rules of prudence. When ever they are instructed in the true ideas of righteousness, they are amazed at the information. They then find *that Jehovah's ways are not like their ways, and that his thoughts are not like their's*. The real conversion of sinners to the truth, is a standing miracle of divine mercy, and is as much above the course of nature as Sarah's having a son. The existence of Abraham's posterity depended totally upon promise; the word of a faithful God was engaged to make his seed as the stars of heaven for multitude. The existence of Christ's spiritual seed depends also upon promise. Jehovah has declared, *that he shall see his seed, and prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand* †. Abraham, in this respect, is a manifest type of the Messiah.

Thus I have shewn in a few particulars, that Abraham was a type of our Saviour, and though this did not lie so immediately in my way, yet, for the sake of those who are never edified with any thing in scripture, unless it is modified according to their particular tastes, I have made this digression.

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\* Gall. iv. 28.

† Isaiah liii. 10.

The way how the Almighty performed his promise to Abraham was very extraordinary; things, to all appearance, were farther from the accomplishment of the promise than ever. Both Sarah and her lord were growing older, and the promise was still delayed. This was to try Abraham's faith, and that he might perceive that there were *no second causes* that had any influence in fulfilling the promise. Sarah at last brings forth a son, and called him Isaac, because God made her laugh. This event happened *when Abraham was an hundred years old*, when, according to the course of nature, Sarah was past child-bearing, and all hopes of an *offspring in a natural way* were gone. Abraham, according to the institution of God, circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old. This was certainly a severe ordinance for children to undergo, and all the reasons that have been given for it, whether civil or political, have no force in them.—As it pleased God to appoint this ordinance, his will and pleasure must remain for the true reason. That God, who had behaved so sovereignly *in promising a son to Abraham*, might require a sign of obedience as much contrary to the ordinary *course of practice*, as he gave him a child contrary to the ordinary *course of nature*. Perhaps the intention of this appointment might be, *to teach Abraham and his posterity*, that they should seek to propagate their species with a view to fulfil *the promise*, and *commandment of God*, and not to gratify their lusts and appetites. It is plain that in their circumcision they had a constant memorial of the covenant of *promise*, and from what was done to their *membrum virile*

*virile* might remember that they ought not to gratify their desires any farther than they were consistent with the commandment and promise of Jehovah. This ordinance plainly taught them, that all desires of intercourse with the sex, unless to propagate a seed to the church, was sinful and criminal.

The patriarch Abraham was not long till he had some disturbance in his family, though he now saw the promise in some part accomplished. It would appear that it was an ancient custom to make a feast at the weaning of children, and Abraham observed the custom. How old children were before they were weaned is not absolutely affirmed. Isaac was probably two or three years old; if this was the case Ishmael would be sixteen years of age, and far from being such a child as one would imagine him to be from the stile the scripture uses in speaking of him. The festivity of this occasion was spoiled from the behaviour of Ishmael, and the jealousy of Sarah. Sarah perceived *the son of the bond-woman mocking*. What Ishmael was passing his jests upon, Moses does not inform us concerning. There is no doubt that he was a waggish boy; for the scripture says he was wild. Perhaps, he was laughing at some of the foolish honours conferred upon his brother, or some of the childish tricks he played on that occasion. An old woman and an only son are not to be sported with. From the words of Sarah, it would seem that Ishmael had been setting up to be joint-heir with Isaac; for Sarah says, *cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac*.

It



It was no doubt grievous to Abraham to part with his son, especially as Sarah herself had given her maid to him, and he was now advanced a good length. But there is no help for it, Ishmael must go and seek his fortune some other where. In those days, it was not so great an hardship to send away a boy of Ishmael's age; he was now able to carry a quiver, and handle a bow; and we find that in a little time he took care of himself. The worst thing that happened to him and his mother was, that their water ran short some time after they went to the wilderness, which, in that place of the country, was not easily born. We find how the want of water pinched the Israelites after they came out of Egypt; and it is not to be expected that Ishmael and his mother would bear thirst much more patiently. Providence, however, pointed them out a well, when Ishmael had his thirst quenched, and we hear no more of his distress. He settled in the wilderness of Paran, and married a wife from among his mother's relations in Egypt.

It was not such hard treatment of Ishmael as may be at first imagined for his father to set him off in this manner; Jacob was sent away much in the same manner. As men in those times lived much by the quiver, and their bow, and there was plenty of land unpossessed, Ishmael, by exercising his skill and activity, might soon recommend himself to some of the neighbouring people, and, by diligence, soon procure a fortune of his own. Abraham, who was able to make such a weaning-feast for his heir, would no doubt give his son Ishmael more than a bottle of water;—under this might be included  
many

24 ABRAHAM'S *Treaty with* ABIMELECH.

many other necessities; but, in this country, water was the most necessary. Ishmael soon made his possession good, and all the powers of this world have never yet been able to drive him out of his possession.

Isaac, according to this history, was born in the land of the Philistines, who, at this time, possessed part of the land of Canaan. It became in after times a part of the possession of the seed of Abraham. Abimelech perceived that Abraham waxed rich and powerful; he wanted, therefore, to make an alliance with the patriarch, that in after times they might not hurt one another. In those times the chief grounds of quarrel among people seem to have been wells of water. Those countries towards Beersheba were in general dry, and the want of wells of water, to such as had large families and much cattle, was severely felt. Abimelech's servants had violently taken away a well of water from Abraham, of this the patriarch complained, and reproved Abimelech for the behaviour of his servants. All matters were at last settled, and they entered into a treaty, which was sealed with an oath, that Abraham was to have the well which he had digged, and that none of them were to hurt one another. This well was called *Beersheba*, or the *well of the oath*, from *Beer* a well, and *sheba* an oath. This was the utmost bounds of the land of Palestine on one side, as Dan was on the other. It was while Abraham was at Beersheba that he received a commandment to offer up his son, which shall be considered at large in the next lecture.—I shall at present conclude this discourse.

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## LECTURE XI.

*The Trial of ABRAHAM'S Faith, in his being commanded to offer up his son ISAAC.—What is understood by the Lord's tempting him.—An Account of Mount MORIAH.—How old ISAAC was at this Time?—Why he submitted to his Father.—What Angel spake to ABRAHAM, &c.*

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GENESIS, xxii. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c.

*And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham.*

*And he said, behold, here I am.*

*And he said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah: and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*

*And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up and went to the place, of which God had told him.*

*Then on the third day Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.*

**T**HE Jews reckon up ten trials of Abraham's faith of which this was the last and the greatest. The Almighty had now confined his promise, to the line of Isaac, and said, *in Isaac shall thy seed*



*be called.* His present commandment was then literally contrary to the promise. Had the Almighty not fixed his promise to the line of Isaac, Abraham might have had some hope, that either *Ishmael*, or his seed, by some other woman, might have fulfilled the promise; but the Lord had fixed the promise in the family of Isaac. A very sceptical person would have concluded, that the Almighty intended to mock the patriarch, and never intended to fulfil his word. For to desire him to sacrifice his son was something like cutting the throat of the promise. It does not appear that Abraham hesitated a moment, nor ever reasoned about the matter. The divine behaviour all along had been so remarkable in bringing order out of confusion, that he did not think that there was any thing too hard for the Lord. It did not appear more difficult for the Lord to raise Isaac from the dead, than at first to bring him from the dead womb of Sarah. *Less and more* makes no difference to divine power. The principle difficulties arose from the divine law which forbids all murder,—the principles of humanity, and paternal affection,—and the opposition which Isaac might make who *was now come to years*, and would probably *value his own life*, more than his father did. The law, set forth in the promise of Noah, *forbade all murder*, and here is a commandment which *immediately required it*. Who could vindicate the character of a being, that threatened judgements against murder, and yet required an immediate act thereof, from a person who is called his friend? Isaac had done nothing worthy of death, and to take away his life was shedding of innocent blood.

Abraham

Abraham certainly believed that God would either find him another burnt offering, or, that he would raise him from the dead; for he could never certainly reconcile his mind to commit such a horrid murder, without believing that Isaac should not be finally lost. The promise had secured Isaac's life, for the Lord had said, *in Isaac shall thy seed be called*; Abraham was therefore well assured that the farthest the commandment could go, would never render the promise of none effect. If the Almighty had intended that Abraham should have sacrificed his son, there would be no vindicating the divine character; but as he only meant it for a trial of Abraham's faith, and in the end freed him from the embarrassment, it argues nothing against the character of God. It shews, that he never intended any human sacrifices, nor did he suffer his commandment to contradict itself, nor contradict the promise.

Had not Abraham been long tutored in the mystery of Providence, and found all things turn out as the Lord had said, he might have been ready to have concluded, that this commandment was the most *unjust* and *absurd*, that was ever given to a rational creature. But as he had seen matters formerly brought to a very extraordinary crisis, and yet answer the end of the promise, he had no doubt that this, like others, would also promote the same end. The apostle to the Hebrews settles this point at once; for he says, Abraham believed, *that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, from whence he raised him in a figure*. Abraham had likewise the principles of humanity to struggle against. Isaac was his son, his only son,—the son of

his old age,—of many prayers, and very dear to him. It required a strong persuasion of faith to get over such difficulties. He was a father, who was bound to *preserve the life of his son*; and to *provide for him*. To slay him, was like putting a knife to his own throat. But such was his faith in the promise, that he did not hesitate, when God commanded him to obey. There is good reason to infer, that neither God would have given this commandment, nor would Abraham so readily obeyed it, had not the promise been made before it. God's promise, that *in Isaac shall thy seed be called*, secured Isaac's life, so that it was not possible that Isaac could then *die*, without the promise should fail. Abraham believed God's promise, and was not afraid that any thing he could do would render it void. He was fully persuaded, that at this time, *killing was no murder*, because Isaac should *live* after he was *slain*, otherwise the promise would not be accomplished, of which he had no doubt. If Abraham had not received the promise before he received this commandment, obedience would have been a direct intention of *murder*; but as the promise secured the life of Isaac, it amounted to no more than an embarrassment for the trial of Abraham's faith, when Isaac was in no danger. Abraham does not seem to have consulted Isaac upon this affair, which one would have thought was essentially necessary; for when he was carrying the *fire* and the *wood*, he could not perceive where the burnt-offering was to come from. Isaac does not seem to have been *a child*, when he could carry so much wood upon his shoulders; and had he been disposed to have resisted

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ed, his father would certainly not have been able to bind him. He must *at least* have been come to *man's estate*, and in that case ought to have been consulted. Abraham left all to the Lord, and performed his part as well as he could; he, no doubt, believed, that if the Almighty intended that he should do any thing to his son, he would obtain his consent, otherwise he would deliver him out of his embarrassment, in some other way. Happen what would, he intended to *try*, and went the whole length, as far as the Almighty would *permit him*.—

Isaac was, no doubt, instructed in the nature of the promise from his infancy, and was taught, by his father, the whole intention thereof; he might therefore comply with his father's design, from the same principle that Abraham went in pursuing it; that *he would raise him from the dead*, or find ways and means to *preserve his life*. Without his consent, Abraham could never have proceeded so far as he went. The Jews tell us of a *fine speech* that Abraham made to Isaac, before he bound him, but, like many others of their stories, it seems to be *apocryphal*.

We are informed in the beginning of this chapter, that the Lord tempted Abraham. This is but an harsh kind of speech, and there was no occasion for it in the translation; for the words read *literally*. *God did try Abraham*. The Hebrew word (*Nissah*) signifies *to make a trial*. This is very applicable to the matter of fact; for it was, no doubt, a severe enough trial, to be called to offer up the son of the promise, *The word*, also signifies *to exalt*, or *lift a standard*; so Abraham,  
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after he was tried, he became higher; his faith was more conspicuous, and his character higher exalted. The Almighty tempts no man, the apostle informs us, for says he, *Let no man say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God, for God tempts no man* \*. The Almighty indeed tries his children, as gold is tried, for their good, that they may be purified from sin and iniquity, but as for temptations, these belong to another quarter. A little more attention to the *Hebrew text*, would have saved both the readers and commentators, a great deal of trouble in many places of the Old Testament, and especially in those places where the word *tempt* is applied to the Almighty.

This appointment, concerning the sacrificing of Isaac, was confined to a certain place; at three days journey distance from *Beersheba*, called the land of *Moriah*, upon a particular mountain, in that country. This was the hill upon which *Solomon built the Temple of the Lord*, and to which the offering of sacrifices was afterwards confined. It, from this, appears, that the Almighty was, by this trial of Abraham's faith, directing his views towards the great sacrifice that he was to make of his only begotten son, who, in the fulness of time, was to be offered up, upon the hill where Abraham was called to offer up Isaac. This place was about *forty miles distant* from *Beersheba*; and considering the then state of the country, and what they had to carry along with them, might make a journey of three days. The mountains and country about Jerusalem seems to have all gone by the name of the

\* James i. 13.

the country of *Moriah*, in the days of Abraham, but that hill upon which the temple was built more especially recived this name, because it was there that he intended to place his name, and establish his worship; for *Moriah* signifies *the fear or doctrine of God*; or a place where God is worshiped. Thus the design and intention of the place, was anticipated by its name, long before it was applied for the established purpose of divine service. There was something in the *literal* signification of the ancient names, of many persons, places and things, that pointed out several *future events*, and *notable occurrences*, which, to the people, who were attentive to the course of Providence, and how God, by the *meaning of names revealed things to come*, plainly hinted to them, what was to happen. The *infidel* part of mankind, in those times, were probably like those of the same character in all ages, who will not believe *the notices of heaven*, unless they are given according to their peculiar *taste*, and *apprehensions*. Abraham was a man of another turn of mind, and endowed with a better disposition. He not only obeyed the commandment concerning the offering up his son, but went chearfully to the place appointed of God. He considered this as an act of worship, which belonged to the place where God was to set his name; and the very name pointed out the place. Had there been no more meant by this commandment, than a *trial of Abraham's faith and obedience*, any other place would have done just as well as mount *Moriah* for the purpose; but this offering of Abraham's son, was *a figure of him that was to come*, in a very special manner, and the place



was named to teach Abraham, that his posterity should, at last, have a standing place of worship in that mountain, and that the greatest act of obedience that ever was paid to God, should be performed there, by HIS SEED, in whom *all the nations of the earth should be blessed*. Our Saviour says, *Abraham saw his days afar off, and was glad*; and, undoubtedly, a person of Abraham's character, could not but perceive, that a place called the fear of God, had some very peculiar intention, and pointed out some very special event. In all periods of the world, spiritual and heavenly minded men, have had different views of Providence, and divine transactions, from the rest of mankind; and though they have always made the best use they could of temporal good things, yet have rather passed through this world, than belonged to it. They have had their conversation in heaven, when they were pilgrims upon this earth, and lived more by the hope of enjoying *good things to come*, than upon the present things they possessed. The best things that belong to our system of senses, have a manifest want in them, when applied to the mind; even when we are in perfect health, and in good spirits, they never satisfy our desires, for we either want to change what we have, or desire more than we are able to enjoy. But when distress and death approaches, they are rather encumbrances, than real enjoyments. All the honours and pleasures in this world, can neither remove an inveterate disease, nor deliver any sinful mortal from the stings of an ill conscience. To be truly happy requires more than we see, or possibly can enjoy, in this life.

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There have been various opinions concerning the age of Isaac at the time that his father was going to sacrifice him. If we may determine his age, according to the probability of the Mosaic history, he must have been at least twenty-five years of age, whatever more. His mother was ninety when she bore him, and she lived to the age of an hundred twenty and seven. It is not very probable that Abraham was more than ten years in the land of the Philistines; and, we find, that immediately after he came from Moriah to Beersheba, his wife died at Kirjatharba, which was afterwards called *Hebron*, a place about twenty-four miles from Beersheba, which afterwards belonged to the tribe of *Juda*. There is some reason to conclude that Sarah, after she discovered the intention of her husband to slay his son, pursued him, and missing him by the way at Kirjatharba, either through fatigue of the journey, or through the apprehension of what was done to her son, fell sick, and died at that place; for, it is plain, she was not with her husband when she died. Now, suppose that Abraham had been twelve years at Gerar, his son Isaac, in this case, would have been five and twenty years of age, and, of consequence, could not have been bound as a sacrifice, without his own consent.

It was observed, that Isaac was instructed from his infancy in the nature and truth of the promise of God, and knew that in him was the seed of his father Abraham to be called; when his father revealed his intention to him at the place appointed, he would only have to put him in mind of who he was, that had made the promise, and how impossible

it was, that even the offering of him for a sacrifice at the divine commandment could endanger his life; for God was able to raise him again from the dead. If the faith of the son was as strong as that of the father, he would have no more fear of his life than the other had of the loss of his only son; for, according to nature, the grief of the one would be almost equal to the fear of the other. A human parent would almost feel as much pain in slaying a beloved son, as the son would feel from the apprehension of being killed. This particular trial of Abraham's faith, had more implied in it than merely that a finite creature, like Abraham, should approve himself a servant of God. It was intended to discover to both the father and the son, and their seed that was to come, that one of their posterity should yield such perfect faith and obedience to God, as should be the ground and foundation of all men's acceptance with the Deity. Isaac was, on this occasion, an eminent type of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when he could easily have rescued himself out of the hands of those who made him suffer, yielded himself up cheerfully as a sacrifice for the sins of guilty men.

Abraham and his son Isaac were, in the conclusion of this affair, instructed in the nature of a vicarious atonement; for, though Isaac was set free from suffering, the Lord provided for himself a burnt offering. The ram that was caught in the thicket was a substitute instead of the son of the promise, which shewed, that though all the children of the promise should be saved from death, and destruction, yet, their salvation was to be by the shedding of  
blood;



blood; and that, without blood, there is no remission of sins. This sort of atonement has been the jest and ridicule of all the wicked of the world, who consider sin as only occasional slips of human nature, and incident to the constitutions of men in all periods of human existence; but they never remember that God gave man a perfect law, and endued him at first with a power to observe it; and that there was once a time when there was no defect in the human constitution, and that all inclinations to sin proceed from a voluntary transgression of a divine commandment.

Those who want to dictate to God in the manner of displaying his attributes, do really substitute themselves in his stead, and forget that they are creatures and sinners. Were they sensible of their own wickedness, they would be thankful that Jehovah was pleased to save them by any means whatsoever, and would not prescribe to him. There is one thing that I may venture to affirm, that there are no ideas even among wicked men, that there is any salvation to the worthless without an atonement; they must also believe that it would be just in themselves to forgive offences freely. All our notions of goodness, are confessed in general to come from God: If God is so good as to forgive all offences without satisfaction, then why do not those, who derive their ideas of goodness from him, act in the same manner, as they would desire him to do.—Whatever speculations men may have in their closets about things of this sort, it does not appear that they carry any of them into practice.—And more than all, it will be found an everlasting truth that

those who most firmly believe in the doctrine of an atonement for sin, are always most merciful and gracious in their disposition.

When Abraham was about to slay his son, Moses informs us that the *angel Jehovah* called to him out of heaven, and forbade him to proceed. Who this angel was, has afforded some ground for conjecture. Some have affirmed, that he was one of those serving angels, who are ministers to those who shall be heirs of salvation; but he receives too exalted a name to be an inferior messenger. It rather seems probable, that it was the same angel which appeared to him before the destruction of Sodom,—whom he worshiped as Jehovah, and prayed to as God; that very person who says in Job, *deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.*—The word (*maleck*) which is commonly rendered *angel* or *messenger*, does not always imply a superior that sends the messenger, but is used to signify a person performing an office, or a piece of work, whether he is sent or not. The word is so used in Job i. 14. There came a messenger to Job, and informed him concerning the destruction of his servants by the Sabeans, when the messenger declared that he alone was left; this plainly shews, that though he was a messenger, there was none sent him, for there were none left, except himself, when Jehovah receives the character of an *angel*, or a *messenger*, it is not so much on account of any commission that he receives, as on account of the thing he reveals, that he bears that character. It is a common objection against the *divinity*, at least the equality of *our redeemer* with *Jehovah*,  
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that he is called *one sent, an angel, or messenger*; but those who make this objection, ought to consider, that *Jehovah* may be a messenger to us, without having any superior to send him, yea, without being sent at all. He who informs us of what we do not know, is, to us, a messenger of knowledge. This messenger, who appeared unto, and called to Abraham, was no less *Jehovah* for being a messenger, nor less a messenger for being *Jehovah*. This is the name that he assumes, when he reveals his favours to sinners, the messenger *Jehovah*. Coming and sending, are, in this respect the same with him; for supposing it is not good English to say, that one sends himself, yet, when he comes of his own accord to deliver a message, he does the same thing, and it is not worth while to dispute about words, when we know the sense. That it was none, except the Almighty, that spake in this character, will appear from the angel's own words, in the 12th verse of this chapter.—*And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham out of heaven, and he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.*

This angel is the same person who is called God, in the first verse, and is said to have tried Abraham; for he there commands him to offer up his son, and in the 12th verse, declares his satisfaction with the trial he had made; for he says, *thou hast not withheld thine only son from me*. In this instance of Abraham, and several others of the ancient believers, in all ages past, there is a strong proof, that if men believed



believed and feared God, according as his word teaches them, they would become masters of all those unruly passions and appetites, that lead them into so many errors in conduct, and make them commit so many grievous sins against God. By faith in the divine word we see, from scripture history, that men have overcome the *strongest passions*, and obeyed God, in opposition even to what was most strongly implanted *in their nature*. There is hardly any passion more strongly planted in the nature of a human parent than the love of an *only child*; than the love of *one's country*. Yet Abraham, at the commandment of God, left his native land, and, on account of the same authority, went to offer up his *only son*, the *son of the promise*.—Any person who will affirm, that the love of pleasure, or the lusts of the flesh, are more strongly ingrafted in our nature, than the *love of our country* and *our offspring*, it will be needless to dispute with them, for they *are really mad*. It is no uncommon thing to hear some *young*, and even some *old libidinous sons of lust*, and *debauchery* affirm, that it is impossible to resist the impulse of their desires when they meet with a suitable object. I would only ask such advocates for sin, whether, notwithstanding *all the propensities of nature*, and *the agreeableness of the object*, if, upon the very moment of approaching to enjoyment, a sword, by the hand of an enemy, was immediately pointed to the breast of the lover, whether it would not make some alterations *in nature*, and *cool* the desires of the flesh? This plainly declares, that the mind can manage the impulse of the body; and if the

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the love and fear of God was a ruling principle in the mind, it would make the soul matter of that material system, that she immediately acts in, and would not suffer her to be a dupe to *carnal desires*.

As an instance that it is *not nature*, but *corruption joined with lust*, that influences, loose persons to pursue carnal gratifications, we may observe, that other animals, in which nature has placed as strong propensities for propogating the species, as in mankind, are not solicited by the *beauty* or *deformity of the object*, provided it is a natural one, but pursue their desires with one, as easily as another. This shews, that they pursue appetite because it is natural, and have not their desires heated by imagination as those of mankind are. From this it appears plain, that if *wild imaginations* incline men to *folly*, a well *regulated* mind will dispose them to *wisdom*. There is a time when the appetites may be restrained, and kept in subjection, and by *good tutoring and education*, may be made the servants of reason and religion; but when once they are indulged, they take the lead and become masters instead of servants. It is not *natural to men*, to deviate from both nature and religion. Reason and conscience are *natural to all men*, except *idiots*, and neither of these teach us to pursue unlawful indulgences.—Those who affirm, that God implanted in the nature of man a propensity to gratify his lusts, when they crave gratification, may as well blame the Almighty for all the unnatural propensities we acquire by *habit* and *indulgence*; for many of these are more strong than what is natural to us. The *excessive desire of wine* proceeds from the same cause that

that an inordinate desire of *pleasure* doth ; the same may be said of the desire of *tobacco*, which is, at first, very unnatural to men, but by *habit* and *practice* becomes more necessary than even daily food. Any desire, whatsoever, when not kept under the dictates of *conscience*, will soon go beyond the bounds of *nature*, and become more necessary in its *unnatural* state than when it was merely natural. It is from this, that many old people, after their powers to gratify their desires *are gone*, are yet *more keen* in their desires, than when they were young ; and if they had the power, would grow worse and worse. If such things were natural to men, the desire would decline with nature, which we find is not the case. Nothing can restrain the passions and appetites within the bounds of nature and reason, except the fear of God shed abroad in the heart — *This* will do it *effectually*, and cause men to make use of the other endowments which God hath given them, to keep in order those natural desires, which, when unrestrained, become *unnatural* and *sinful*. The same faith which made Abraham get the better of his *natural affection*, will make the filthiest man in the world overcome his *lusts*, or the most covetous man get the better of the love of the world. The divine word, as a principle of action, *brings down every strong hold*, and renders *every thought obedient to the authority of Jesus Christ*. Were persons of *high authority as wise as they ought to be*, they would study, instead of all other systems, to recommend the word of God to their subjects ; for without the understanding thereof, suppose they should make the one half destroy the other, those that



that remained would rebel against them, or, by mutual conformity with them in sin, bring down the judgments of God upon their heads.

After Abraham was set free from his embarrassment concerning the offering of his son, he gave a particular name to mount Moriah. He called it *Jehovah-jireh*. In the margin of our Bibles this name is interpreted *the Lord will see, or provide*. Because the writers of lexicons have rendered *jireh* by *videt* and *videbit*, those who have made translations of this passage have rather followed the Latin than the Hebrew, and have interpreted *Jehovah-jireh* *the Lord will see*, and have added *he will provide*, because he provided a ram to Abraham instead of his son Isaac. I would rather choose to render these words *Jehovah will visit or make himself known*, and so it has a future signification, and is a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, who was to manifest God to the world upon this very mountain in the second temple. As for the latter part of this verse, it appears to have been totally mistaken by our translators. They render it, *as it is to this day, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*. The original is *Asker Jeomer Hajom Behar Jehovah-jireh*. When this is joined with the former part of the verse, the whole will read in this manner. *And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah will visit; for it shall be said in those days, Jehovah shall be seen upon the mount*. It is therefore a manifest prophecy of the revelation of the Son of God, who was to appear in his glory in his temple, and make the attributes of God and his ways known to men. There is also reason to con-

clude, that, on this occasion, there was a vision made to Abraham ; for *Moriah* signifies a *vision*, and joined with the word *mountain*, signifies *the mountain of vision*, or *revelation*. It is not improbable that the Angel Jehovah gave him a manifestation of that appearance he was to make in the same place, in the fulness of time ; and Abraham's words are only a sort of a description of the vision he saw ; for the whole verse is a sort of rhapsody, like the words of one that was in a rapture with what he was saying. The words *Jehovah-Jireh*, *Jehovah-Jcareh*, are the burden of his speech. He speaks like a man in a transport, who had just come from beholding something that had engrossed all his thoughts—*The Lord will visit—the Lord on that day will appear on this mountain*. The whole beauty of the text is lost for want of understanding the spirit of it. But when we consider the patriarch just now freed from a strange embarrassment, and, over and above, favoured with a vision of a personage who should come from heaven, and *tabernacle in human flesh* upon Mount *Moriah*, in the *fulness of time*, we may well conceive the meaning of this rhapsody. *The Lord will visit.—The Lord will appear on this mountain in those days*. It seems more like the speech of a man wild in his imagination through transport of joy, than merely the speech of a person naming a mountain, or telling a matter of simple fact.

There is one thing that may be observed concerning all the visions that were made to the patriarchs, and that is, their principal signification was future, and looked forward to things to come. Persons,  
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who read the Scriptures without care and attention, are ready to imagine that those revelations that were made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were only meant as particular favours to them as extraordinary men, or to answer particular purposes to them in the time of their trials and afflictions; but, they had a much more high and noble end. They were intended as notices of a more bright display of divine glory that was to be made, in which thousands of millions were as much interested, as the persons to whom they were immediately signified.

The principal design of all the ancient revelations to the patriarchs, was to shew to them, and the world, that their final and everlasting happiness depended upon a work that was to be performed by the Messiah in the latter days; hence, they had the gospel preached to them, as well as we have, and they were informed of those glad tidings of great joy to all people, that a Saviour should come, who should, by his obedience unto the death, redeem the chief of sinners from death and destruction,—who should enlighten the world, and make light arise out of darkness. All these things the ancient believers had in their view as objects of hope, which made them rejoice in expectation, that though they would not live to see that day, they should yet enjoy the benefit thereof, and, at last, be raised up into everlasting life, when their Redeemer should have compleated the whole mystery of Providence, and finished the great drama of this system. The glass through which they saw things to come, was as perfect and true as that through which we see things that are past, and they were



as certain that the Redeemer should come and fulfil righteousness, as we are that he is come. They rejoiced in the hope of his coming, and we rejoice in the persuasion that he has finished transgression. But they had one thing in common with us, namely, the hope of a blessed resurrection at the last day. I know that a bishop of the church of England, to whom I once paid my respects some years ago, in a publication, which did not please his Lordship's vanity, has affirmed, that the ancient Hebrews knew nothing of the *resurrection of the just*, nor of a *future state of rewards and punishments*, except only a few, who kept it a profound secret from the rest. But great men are not always wise, nor have bishops all the knowledge in the world. It is really a great disgrace to a church, which professes to believe revelation, to have a bishop really or wilfully ignorant of what he might easily have known. Dr Lowth, now bishop of Oxford, who understood the subject perfectly, endeavoured to set the bishop right, but it was all to no purpose, for *his Lordship of Gloucester* was determined to remain in ignorance. When I come to the History of Job, which will happen in a lecture or two, I shall consider this subject more fully. I only now observe, that Abraham was not worthy of the character that has been given him by God, provided he concealed from his family, and posterity, a doctrine that was revealed to him in very strong terms. How was it possible that all the families of the earth could be blessed in his seed, if the Messiah was not to raise them up at the last? For, many of them were dead before that Jesus came, and could receive nothing  
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temporal from him, and many of the families of the earth were dead before Abraham was born, and could not receive any favour that related to Canaan, or any temporal favour whatsoever. It was, therefore, a poor promise made to Abraham, that his seed should bless all nations, and yet the whole should be kept a secret, till many ages were past, when so much depended upon the understanding thereof.—There is something very extraordinary in the idea that the doctrine of rewards and punishments should have been a real secret to all the Jews, except a few, till the time of the Babylonish captivity, when so much depended upon the knowledge thereof, to all individuals. If there was no more necessary in the knowledge of a future state, than to make men dutiful to their superiors, in this world, the extraordinary Providence that attended the Jewish theocracy, might, in some particulars, supply the place thereof;—but as there is no more necessary to make them serve God in spirit, and in truth, than the fear of temporal punishment, one would think that the knowledge of a future state was necessary to make men serve God, from a principle of hope, which is one of the strongest principles in any religion we know of. But what proves plainly that the ancient Jews knew a future state of rewards and punishments, is, the apostle informs us, that the gospel was preached unto them as well as unto us. Now, it is acknowledged by both sides of this dispute, that life and immortality was brought to light by the gospel; it is therefore a sure conclusion, that all, to whom the gospel have been preached, have had information of a future state

state of life and immortality. One would not imagine, that the knowledge of the gospel, before the law of Moses, was any way darkened by any thing that God revealed to him; for the doctrine of sacrifices and atonements could be of no significance, provided they had not some view with regard to the life to come; for we are fully assured, by the apostle, that they were insufficient to take away sin, as to the soul, any farther than they were figures of good things to come. They therefore were a sort of gospel symbols, that taught the church that the atonement, which saved the soul, depended upon something that was figured and represented by those sacrifices.—And the true believers of the divine institution of the Jewish ordinances, which were not merely political, were as well assured of salvation, by what was signified to them, as Abraham was, that Christ should, in the fulness of time, (upon mount Moriah) visit his church in person, upon the earth. There is one thing which shews that if the state of the Jewish theocracy was only supported by that extraordinary Providence which attended it, that the appointment was no ways sufficient for the end proposed; for there never was a people in this world, whose history is recorded, that so often forgot the visible appearances of Providence, by which they were punished.—And it plainly appears, from the history of that people, that their chief blame rested upon their despising those ordinances, where mercy and the gracious favours of God were pointed out. We never find them blamed for not remembering that *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, were swallowed up by an earthquake, though we find them



them frequently condemned for not considering the ordinances that were given them upon mount Horeb. While they had no other views than what related to this life, they soon forgot all that had happened to them, but when they carefully observed the ordinances which related to a future state, we seldom hear any mention of their transgressions. In a word, there are no miseries that can happen by any temporal punishment, in this world, but some daring sinners for some transient pleasures will suffer, but if they are fully persuaded of a reckoning hereafter, and a future judgement to come, they will hardly run the risk. From hence it is manifest that no doctrine is of more service to *civil society*, than the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments.——Upon the whole, if any person will venture to affirm, that there was no gospel preached before the time of the Babylonish captivity, or before the coming of our Saviour, then they will manifestly contradict the apostle; but unless they can prove that the apostle was in an error, they will never be able to prove that the ancient Jews knew nothing of a future state of rewards and punishments.

Abraham, no doubt, taught his family what God revealed to him; for the Lord says, concerning him, that he knew that he would command his house to walk in his ways: now, if Abraham instructed his house in what he knew himself, there is no manner of doubt, but they were acquainted with what is to happen hereafter, as well as what was to happen in this life.——It must therefore be absurd to suppose that the whole seed of Abraham,

ham, except a few, should have been ignorant of what their father taught them, and set forth by his example. But there is another thing further to be considered, whether there is any reason to believe that, from the beginning of the world, an information of fellowship with God in the next world, was necessary to make men meet for it in this? or, whether being made meet for it in this, was not always necessary for the enjoyment thereof? If the knowledge of a future state was not essentially necessary for the obtaining of eternal spiritual happiness, I do not see for what end our Saviour came into the world, or for what purpose his coming was so long announced before he came; for, if men living in ignorance of future communion with God, might enjoy it as well as those who are instructed therein, the coming of our Saviour, in that case, must have been a very needless experiment. When Jesus came, we find him as a prophet instructing his disciples, and the Jews, in what Moses and the prophets had said of him before; now, the law of Moses, and the doctrine of the prophets, were allowed as a common privilege to all the Jews, and if the end of Christ's coming was pointed out there, then life and immortality must have been known to them, otherwise, Moses must have taught a doctrine without any end, which is abundantly absurd to suppose.

There is one thing further to be considered concerning Abraham in this place, that the renewing of the promise to him is particularly pointed at his seed, in the singular number;—*and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.* This manner of expression

pression is made use of to lead the view of the reader to the true seed of Abraham, that the promise especially related to. The apostle explains the meaning of this place very distinctly. Now, to Abraham, and his seed were the promises made. He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but as of one, and of thy seed, which is Christ \*. Concerning this one seed it is affirmed, that he shall possess the gate of his enemies;—and this the Messiah did, when he subdued principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his death. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had a right to take possession of the gate of his enemies, so the word *yirash* signifies to possess upon a legal tenure, by an hereditary right. This right was first founded upon promise,—*I will give him the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession* †. Our Saviour obtained also a right by redemption; he died, and gave the price of his blood for the salvation of his enemies; and, in consequence thereof, he exercises his power to secure his right. The Psalmist mentions a day of his power, when his people shall be made willing ‡, when those that were his enemies shall become his sincere children, and loving friends. The operation of the power of Christ upon the hearts of his enemies, is one of the most wonderful operations that is to be seen in the whole system of the works of God. An amazing instance thereof was given upon the day of Pentecost, when

\* Gal. iii. 16.

† Psl. ii. 8.

‡ Psl. cx. 3.



thousand of his most inveterate enemies, by the preaching of his death and resurrection, were made his most zealous friends. The apostle Peter, by preaching the name and character of Jesus, whom they had slain as a malefactor, was the instrument of converting an amazing multitude to the obedience of Christ. The power of Jesus was, on this occasion, marvellously displayed; for, without some invisible divine influence, it was impossible for all the oratory of the universe to have overcome the prejudices of those enemies of the Son of God. But such was the power that attended the doctrine of a crucified Christ, that, even his betrayers and murderers were made to confess him to be the true Messiah, and their Saviour. It was on this occasion that he *possessed the gate of his enemies*, and was *declared to be the Son of God, with power*. It is a strong proof of the divinity and authenticity of the Scriptures, that the ancient prophecies and promises concerning the Messiah, that were made at such a distance of time from the accomplishment, should have been so particularly fulfilled, that it is not possible for a sober man to compare the predictions with the facts which happened, but he must conclude that these are the very things that were spoken of by Moses and the prophets. This is also a strong foundation for the faith of such as fear God with respect to things that are yet to come, and are still in the womb of the promise; for, as we have so many thousands of years experience of the divine veracity and faithfulness, with regard to things that are past, we have no reason to doubt, that he who  
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has been always faithful to his word will ever fail, or come short in any thing he has promised.

In reading the ancient history of the peregrinations of the patriarchs, we are ready at first to conclude, that their travels are more extensive than they really were. One would hardly expect, that Moses would have made use of such stile concerning Abraham's travelling from Beersheba to Jerusalem, when it is found only to be forty miles distance. After Abraham and his little retinue had travelled part of three days, it is said, that he only saw the place *a-far off*, when yet the whole journey might have been performed in two days. Perhaps the country was not patent in those days, nor the highways in good repair, and the servants were loaded with a burden of wood, prepared to burn the sacrifice. Abraham was indeed old, but then he rode upon an ass, which, in that part of the world is not much inferior to one of our horses. The whole of the land of Canaan consisted of but a few days journey; for, from Beersheba to Caesaria Philippi, which was the whole length of Palestine, there were not above an hundred and sixty miles from north to south; and, where it was broadest, it was not above sixty miles from east to west.—It is probable that they travelled slow in those days, and, in ordinary cases, they could not proceed fast in their journeys, as they carried all their substance along with them from place to place. Flocks and herds could only move slowly, and they would be obliged also to direct their stages, according to the nature of the fields and pastures that were in their way. It would appear, that in the

days of the patriarchs, the world was but thinly inhabited, and that the tenure of lands was not settled; otherwise, it is not probable that such multitudes of people, with their flocks and herds, would have had liberty to have roamed about, as they did, unmolested. It was a lightsome way of living, though exposed to many dangers; and yet, upon the whole, we read of no wars, except in those places where there were kings, monarchies, or some forms of police. It is seldom that we hear of shepherds, and those who led a rural life, drawing the sword, or engaging in war.—War is a system of behaviour that took its rise from monarchs, or persons who wanted to have dominion over others,—who were at more pains to work upon the vicious habits of individuals, than to encourage virtue, or restrain vice. Had there been no sin, there would have been no kings but God, and where there are the fewest vices, there will always be the less occasion for laws, and signs of dominion will seldom appear. We do not find in the whole history of Abraham, though he was a prince, and head of a pretty large community, that he ever exercised any acts of dominion, or practised any penal laws. There were no punishments inflicted in his family that we read of. I suppose that this proceeded from his teaching his house to walk in the ways of God. If all magistrates would behave as Abraham did, there would be no occasion for jails, bailiffs, or executioners. These are only *succedaneums* for the ignorance, sloth, or ungodliness of rulers, and visible signs of the curse of God upon society. The history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is very fully discussed



discussed by Moses, and yet we never meet with the smallest hint, that ever there were any acts of magisterial authority, in the way of punishment, inflicted in their families. As for Abraham, it does not appear that there were any acts of wickedness, worthy of legal cognizance, committed in his house, though his family consisted of several hundreds of persons. And, as for his son Isaac, he seems to have had as regular a family as his father; and, there is not the smallest notice, that there was any disorder in his family, worthy of the consideration of a civil magistrate, all his life-time. In the family of Jacob, there were several atrocious crimes committed by some of his sons, particularly by Judah and Reuben, for which, we do not find that they were punished in this world. But, this point shall be considered, when we come to the family of Jacob. What I intend, by what has been just now observed, is, that if rulers would be at pains to have their subjects instructed rightly in the fear of God, and the nature of true goodness, they would have little occasion for any penal laws, or coercive authority.

The education of the community ought to be the first object of the magistrates care and attention; for if all the subjects were well instructed in the knowledge of God, from their infancy, there would be occasion for fewer laws, and there would be seldom any cause for making use of coercive power. Though there may be some instances of persons educated in the principles of divine knowledge, making ship-wreck of their faith, and becoming more vicious than common profligates, yet, this is not owing to their  
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their education, but to their having an opportunity of fleeing over to a party more suited to their inclination.—But if good education was general in a country, and if to be vicious was disgraceful, though there might be little merit in some persons abstaining from evil, yet society would be the better thereof, and there would be less occasion for the practice of penal laws, and statutes. When once the principles of the fear of the Lord are frequently repeated in the minds of men, it will be a very difficult task to eradicate them altogether. There are many instances of the mere force of education in the minds of wicked men, when they are in distress, or at the point of death; those ideas of their first education return upon them, with double force, and either produce the salutary effects of *repentance* and *reformation*, or prove a most severe punishment to the apostate. If a magistrate is not religious, and fears the Lord, he will be a plague instead of a blessing to society; his example will mislead others, as well as his partiality in the execution of justice will injure many. There is no reason to expect justice where the fear of God is wanting. Abraham's jealousy was well founded; he knew that there was no safety in any country without it. This observation of the patriarch ought to be considered seriously by all rulers of nations and kingdoms; without this divine principle, the *thrones of monarchs will shake to their foundation*, and their *crowns totter on their heads*. There is a remarkable instance of this observation in the case of the *ten tribes* after their revolting from the house of David. Jeroboam seduced them from the fear and worship

worship of the true God, by setting up objects of false worship at Dan, and Bethel; in consequence of this all manner of wickedness abounded, and such convulsions happened in the nation, that threatened its total downfal, and, in the conclusion, effected it. It became common, after the fear of God, departed from the Israelites, for the subjects to assassinate their kings, by which there were revolutions almost every year, and sometimes more frequent. A magistrate holds his life upon a very precarious tenure, when his subjects are not instructed in the fear of God. If the manners of a people are not very soft and mild, there are no powers whatsoever that will be able to restrain them, except the power of the gospel. This will render the minds of men *gentle* without being *effeminate*, *obedient*, without being *mean*, and *dutiful* without being *slavish*. In those barbarous times, preceding the reformation in Europe, notwithstanding, that princes carried their arbitrary power as far as they well could, the history of that period informs us, that very few of those tyrants came to their graves in the ordinary way of mankind, but were murdered by their own subjects, and sometimes by their nearest relations. Without the fear of God, a standing army are no more than legions of armed ruffians, that will be as ready to draw their swords against their sovereign, and their country, as in their defence. The fear of the Almighty is the true basis of loyalty, and the only sound principle of patriotism; without it, all professions of loyalty are only court-intrigues, intended to be a cover of hypocrisy to serve private interest,



rest, and professions of patriotism are only the effusions of factious spirits, who are never satisfied but when they are in the midst of anarchy, or at the head of tyranny. Such as fear the Lord sincerely, are loyal from principle, without having any immediate view to private interest, and they will, from the same principle, resist power, when it runs in a channel contrary to the honour of that God whom they fear. Kings, and countries, are to Christians like caravansaries and their owners; believers tarry a while in them, and pay the landlord his fare, according to the statutes of the caravansary, then leave them, and go their way. They do not quarrel with the master for taking his fare according to statute; but, if he should make encroachments, contrary to the rules of the caravansary, they would complain, and, perhaps, refuse his demands; or, if they could not resist him, they would give him no reverence in their hearts, because he would, in such a case, deserve none. A man's country and King are like his house and his landlord, if he does not like them he may change them, and go elsewhere; but, he should not pretend to make every other person do the same thing, for, in such a case, he would soon find the country he went to like that which he left. Every man, that is come to the years of discretion, has as good a right to chuse his country as to chuse his business or profession; and, it is ridiculous to affirm, because a person is born in such a nation, that he is the property of that country. Upon the whole, men like Abraham, who are in a state of pilgrimage, will be careful not to engage too much in the civil affairs of any country;

country; they will be patriots at large, wish well to all, but look for an heavenly and better country. Such persons will be sober and peaceable subjects, wherever they come, and will never study to disturb the tranquility of any state, where they may happen to reside. True notions of the fear and worship of God naturally make men sober and peaceable, and, if it were possible to have thrones and crowns established upon the fear of Jehovah, we would see nations behave very differently from what they generally do. But this is what we must not expect, till the *kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ.*

Pure and undefiled religion is profitable for all men, and good for all nations; and all persons of influence, of power and authority, should study to promote it. There is no safety in this world, or in the next, without it. Men, who do not fear God, will never honour the king, nor love any country. They will, without this fear, be only like the cattle, who love the best pasture, but care for no place more than another, but for the sake of gratifying their appetites.

Before we conclude this discourse, it may be necessary to consider two particular things in the history of Abraham;—the first is, the form and manner of worship he observed, and his behaviour upon the death of Sarah. We are informed, that, while Abraham abode in the land of the Philistines, at Beerseba, he planted a grove, and called upon Jehovah, the everlasting God. Before the giving of the law to Moses, the worshippers of God were not confined to any particular place in serving of

him. Groves of trees, situated in retired places, were used for chapels, or places of worship; they seem to have been *inclosed plots of ground*, round the borders of which *thick rows of trees were planted*, and the middle part was open, whereby they saw the heavens, and contemplated the wonderful works of God. These served for a cool retreat from the sun in the time of sultry heat, and were also a shelter from wind and storms, when they happened. Places of this sort are undoubtedly well calculated for promoting meditation, and for collecting those ideas that are scattered in the bustle of life, and the hurry of business. They are fine retirements for heavenly-minded persons to converse with their Maker, and to pour out their souls to that benevolent Saviour who takes pleasure in them that fear him. The original design of groves was noble and excellent, but, like many good institutions, it became afterwards to be abused. Those devote retirements of religious and godly men were, in process of time, prostituted to the purposes of *impiety, idolatry, and uncleanness*. Instead of being places of meditation and prayer for the children of God, and the resort of grave and sober persons, they were made places of assignation, where the ungodly assembled; and the secret retirements of the lascivious and the vicious. Groves were undoubtedly very healthful and agreeable places of worship in those countries where the heat is *great*, and where it rains *seldom*. In fine weather, devotion performed in a grove will be more animated than any religious service performed in the finest cathedral in Europe.—These oratories, which the patriarchs



patriarchs used for divine worship, were also the places where they offered sacrifices ; in these, there was an altar for offering all sorts of oblations, which, till the giving of the law, served as types and figures of the Messiah. The Hebrews called an altar *Mizbeach*, which signifies the place where they killed sacrifices,—*a little eminence raised above the ground*, upon which animals were laid to be slain ; or, when slain, were burned and consumed to ashes. When the *altar* and *sacrifice* are included in one general idea, they signify a propitiatory, or *propitiation* ; and, in ancient times, were used to point out the *body* and *office* of the *Messiah*. These places for sacrifice are called altars in our language, from the Latin word *altare*, which signifies a place raised higher than the ground ; but the word altar, in our language, is no ways expressive of the intention of the action, like the Hebrew word *Mizbeach*, which implies both a place built or raised for offering sacrifices, and the killing of the creature that was offered. Altars were either of stones, or earth. The institution given to Moses was, *An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings, and thy peace-offerings, thy sheep, and thy oxen ;—and if thou make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewen stone ; for, if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it \**. Acts of worship, by *sacrifice*, are purely of divine institution, and atonements by shedding of blood of heavenly original ; for it does not appear, from any inventions of wise men and

H 2 *philosophers,*

\* Exod. xx. 24.

*philosophers*, that have ever been brought to the view of the public, that they conceived that all men were worthy of death for transgressing the law of God. And some who have attempted to assume the idea of guilt *revealed in the Scriptures*, have been so ignorant, as to transgress an express law with an intention to appease the divine indignation.—They have offered the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls, which shew us plainly that they had no ideas of a vicarious redemption that was consistent *with moral rectitude*. Without being taught of God, the world has always, since sin entered, done one of two things, either behaved as if there were no divine justice, or acted as if there were no divine mercy. There never were any except the *Almighty*, that had wisdom enough to devise an *atonement for sin*, that was not inconsistent with some *positive divine law*, or contrary to the *ideas of justice and mercy*. Whenever men attempt to devise *acts and forms of religion for themselves*, there is something so *whimsical and absurd* in their devices, that it is easy to perceive that the *Almighty* had no hand in them. When Aaron attempted to introduce *his calf* he *acted like a fool*, and *spoke like a child*.—And yet one may venture to pronounce, that there was as much good sense in *Aaron's device*, as in any other that is *not of divine appointment*. If we once depart from the worship of the true God, according as it is commanded in divine revelation, a calf is just as good an object of devotion as any other thing. Even *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Virgin Mary, and all the saints departed*, are just as ignorant of the people

people of this earth, *unless they are informed, as Aaron's calf.*

The patriarchs, as they worshipped in groves, and had altars in their oratories, so they worshipped the Deity under certain names that he made himself known by. In Abraham's church he called upon *Jehovah El Olam*, Jehovah the everlasting God.—These names, applied to *one object of worship*, point out some characters and manifestations of God, which Abraham certainly understood. *Olam* when applied to the Almighty, may signify his *invisibility* as well as his *eternity*, and teaches us that human wisdom can form no devices of the divine nature that are exact images thereof, more than an invisible object can be drawn with the pencil, or delineated by the skill of the greatest master.—The *Deity* is an object of our *faith*, but not of our *sight*; he has given us a description of his moral character, which is an object of our understanding, but what his *nature is in the abstract* he has not taught us, and we therefore do not know it. An image of God is an absurd impossible thing for any person to form. Even an *image of Christ's human nature is ridiculous and profane*, for no man ever could prove that he sat for to have his picture drawn in the days of his flesh; and, when his body was glorified after his resurrection, it was too spiritual for any limner to delineate. A body that could come into a room when the doors were shut, would be too fine a subject for the pencil of an *Apelles* to draw upon canvass.

When Abraham worshipped Jehovah, the everlasting God, he considered him as the unchangeable  
fountain



fountain of all truth, and worshiped his name with regard to the promise he had made to him, concerning all the ends of the earth being blessed in his seed. As *Jehovah* implies *self-existence*, *El Olam* implies *infinite power and ability to give existence* to whom *he pleases*, and *uphold them* in what manner *he will*. But in this worship of Abraham, which he performed to the *invisible Jehovah*, there is still some respect held to the symbols of that visible glory which the patriarch had been favoured with in former relations ; and though he considered it to be *impious* to form images of the *invisible God*, he did not account it criminal to worship *his glory*, when *made visible in the person of the Messiah*. The worship of this patriarch was directed to God through a mediator, as truly as the worship of Christians is now directed to God through Christ Jesus. The patriarchs appear to have had a true sense of religion upon their minds habitually ; for, upon receiving special favors, they always performed some new and special act of religious devotion to God, out of gratitude for what kindness he had shewn them. Abraham never received a favour from Jehovah, that is remarked in the history of Moses, but he was careful to return some grateful expression of worship, and thanksgiving, soon after he received it. Whatever blemishes there may be in the character of Abraham, yet he seems always to have had the presence of God before his eyes, and to have accounted his favour his chiefest glory, and greatest happiness. There are few persons, in the present age, of such rank and dignity as Abraham was, that would spend so much time in performing

forming acts of religion, or be at so much pains to instruct their families in the fear of God. The Sabbath that remains for the people of God, appears to have been more the object of his desires and pursuit than the enjoyment of the earthly Canaan. Through the glass of revelation that he was favoured with, he saw *the land that is afar off*, and steered his course to that immortal rest, of which Canaan was only a shadow and type. This was a wise method of making use of earthly things,—to make them rememberancers to his soul of heavenly enjoyments. Happy would it be for all men to pursue the same practice: this would be the only true method of gaining by the enjoyment of temporal blessings.

During near the period of sixty years that Abraham was in Canaan, we never hear of any person dying in his family, till we have an account of the death of Sarah. It is not to be supposed, that in such an extensive household as that of the patriarch, where there were upwards of three hundred men, but in such a space of time there would some die.—But, the reason why they are not mentioned is, they did not belong to the promise, but are suffered to go into oblivion like the rest of the people of the land. It was otherwise with Sarah, for *Jehovah declared* that Sarah should have a son, in whom the *seed of Abraham should be called*. When Sarah died, Abraham purchased a burying-place for her, and in the grave of his wife took a real tenure of the land of promise. The patriarch seems to have been in good esteem with the people of the land, and might have had

had any reasonable favour from the men of Kirjath-arba, without paying any price for it. When the *sons of Heth* were addressed by *Abraham*, they behaved with *great civility and politeness*. The moderns are ready to imagine, that the ancients were a set of *vulgar and barbarous mortals*, destitute of *all politeness and good manners*, but in *Abraham's behaviour to the Hittites*, and their conduct to him, it does not appear, that there were good breeding a-wanting on the *one hand*, nor humanity on the other. The patriarch behaved like a stranger, who knew he had no present title or right to any land in that country; and therefore solicited the favour of having the privilege of buying a burying place, which he might call his own, where he might deposit the ashes of his wife and sister, *Sarah*;—who was once the delight of his eyes, but now an object that he wanted out of his sight. Death makes a *strange* alteration upon the *finest fabric* in human nature; when once the soul takes flight, and forsakes this mortal tabernacle, the countenance soon turns *wan*, the cheeks *pale*, the lips *livid*, and the whole *loathsome*.—Death is a looking-glass, where no person can fix his eyes and find reason to be proud of any thing he possesses. The *finest complexion* soon turns as loathsome in the grave as that which is accounted more ugly. Were the *great*, the *noble*, and the *proud*, permitted to see how the *worms riot in their vile bodies* when laid in the tomb, they would scarcely reckon *greatness worth enjoying*, *nobility worth having*, or *crowns worth wearing*. The most *skilful antiquarian*, if remove a few adventitious things from the bodies of *monarchs, kings, generals,*



nerals, and warriors, would not be able to distinguish between a *prince* and a *peasant*, a *hero* and a *coward*, or a *fool* and a *wise man*, by looking at their dust in the grave.

The transaction between Abraham and the Hittites seems chiefly to have been carried on between him and Ephron, one of the family of Heth, the son of Canaan, the son of Ham. They are called Hittites or Hethites, from their father Heth; and Ephron seems to have been a chief man in the city of Hebron at this time. This Hethite made both a fair and humane offer to Abraham; he offered him the field and the cave of Machpelah for nothing. As Abraham was a stranger it was a kind offer; and, as he was in distress for the loss of his beloved Sarah, there was a good deal of humanity in it. There are few friends so ready to give such presents to their poor and needy brethren in some Christian countries. And indeed, it is far better dealing with heathens than with such as have only a form of godliness without the power thereof. Hypocrites go upon the square, in money matters, alike with saints and sinners. Religion is only a clock to cover their deceit, but in their hearts they are mere heathens, only with this difference, that they are worse for having a form of religion. All persons who have made any observation, will find that there are none so sharp, cruel, and severe, as mere formulists and hypocrites. They are so accustomed to profess what they neither believe nor feel, that the distresses of others give them no pain, and their happiness gives them no pleasure. Heathens and hypocrites are pretty much equal

with one another in their opinions of each other ; for, as the hypocrite judgeth the heathen to have no religion, the infidel believes that the hypocrite has as little in reality, and has this aggravation in his character, that he professes what he neither feels nor believes. A stranger at any time had better fall among heathens than hypocrites ; for there may be some favour with the first, but never any with the latter, except for twice as much again. Sanbalat, Tobijah, and the mongrel Jews, were the greatest enemies that Nehemiah, and the builders of the second temple, ever had.

Abraham, as he was able to purchase a burying-place, would not accept of the field and cave of Machpelah in a gift. He, therefore, purchased it for four hundred shekles of silver, which according to the king's shekle, which was that by which the Jews bought and sold in ordinary cases, would amount to £. 25 of our money. Stackhouse, in his History of the Bible, says, that this number of shekels amounted to £. 60 sterling, but this could not have been possible, even suppose they had been shekles of the sanctuary, which were just the double of the other. The highest that the sum could have reached, even suppose they had been the highest shekle, was £. 50. But, it is more probable that they were the ordinary coin that was used in common business ; and, considering the then value of the land, was a good price for such a field, as was only sufficient for a burying-place. It is not very probable that it was much larger than an ordinary garden, and therefore Abraham paid the sufficient value thereof. The most probable conjecture

jecture concerning this field is, that it was a sort of of grove with a den or cave in it; for Moses mentions the trees that were about it on the border. It might probably be like Abraham's oratory, which he planted at Beersheba for a place of worship. Whatever it was, or however large, or small, it was sold to Abraham, in presence of the people of Hebron, in the gate of the city. Public transactions in those days, and in those countries, were performed in the gates, or in some public parts of towns and cities, that all might be witnesses, as all were concerned in what was done. The Canaanites, at this time, were not under subjection to kings and arbitrary monarchs; they had chief men in their country, and in their cities; but they looked after them, and inspected their transactions. They did not trust their liberty and property in the hands of one or two men, without minding their own affairs, but attended to their own business on proper occasions. The sanction of the people was required to public transactions. When Abraham made his speech, it was in the audience of the people, to whom he bowed with reverence, and opened his cause to them with proper respect. He desired the assembly to speak to Ephron, the son of Zoar, that he would sell his field to him for the possession of a burying-place. All was said and done in public, in the audience of the children of Heth; and, when the contract was made, it was made sure, *in presence of all that went in at the gate of the city.* Abraham, by this transaction, came to have a freehold in the land of Canaan, which served as a pledge of his right, till the time of the pilgrimage



of his posterity was ended. This served also as a token that the promise, which was made to the seed of the patriarch, should one day be accomplished. This method of performing public deeds was the best imaginable for preventing quarrels and disputes concerning property ; for there could be no clandestine practices used, or frauds committed, without being detected. A few interested persons, in making a transfer of property, might, by cunning or fraud, commit injustice, and cheat one another ; but, when all their proceedings were to be publicly inspected, by all that were citizens in the place, it was hardly possible for the most consummate villain to execute a fraud. In deeds of purchase the ancients made two copies, one which the purchaser kept in his own possession, and another, that was lodged in the hands of the judges, or magistrates of towns and countries, and was deposited in the public registers. These were signed by witnesses, in the presence of the citizens assembled in the gates of the city, or in that place where assemblies were held, and had the public seal annexed to them. In case of any dispute concerning the agreement, there were not only witnesses, who signed the deeds, but the whole city were witnesses, who were the evidences. The Hebrews called the writing of the purchase *Sepher Ham-mikna*, the book of the purchase ; and this writing was made according to custom, or according to some established statute of the country. The writing, which was only according to custom, was called *Sepher Mirvah*, which signified as much as—a law given in writing ; the other, which was established by statute, was called

called *Sepher Kukim*, or a writing formed according to a statute or law, engraven by an engraver. When Jeremiah bought his uncle's field, his security was made according to both these laws \* ; and he seems to have made his purchase much from the same principle that Abraham purchased the field of Machpelah. Jeremiah made this purchase, to shew that the Jews should return from their captivity back to the promised land ; and Abraham bought this possession, from a firm belief that his seed should come in due time into the possession of Canaan, as the Lord had spoken.

The people of that country seem to have had a great opinion of Abraham ; for, (in the 6th verse) they give him the title of lord, and prince. The Hebrew words are, *Adoni, Nesi Elohim*. These two last words read literally, *thou art the prince Elohim, among or in the midst of us*. Our translation renders these words, *a great prince*. But, they mean more than that greatness which is ordinarily annexed to power. There seems to have been something in his conduct and behaviour that gained their esteem more than his riches,—the number of his vassals,—or the splendour of his family. There was something so god-like about him ; he was a just, righteous, and holy man.—And, if it be true what the Phœnician writers affirm concerning him, he was a teacher and instructor of that people in the worship of the true God ; and, on that account, received the name of *Nesi Elohim*, which is, by interpretation, *a chief magistrate* ;  
or,

\* Jer. xxxii. 9, 10, &c.

or, one that rules for God. This is what *all magistrates ought to do*; and they are bound to do so by their office. But Abraham does not appear to have been a civil magistrate among the Hethites, for we do not find any claim he put in for jurisdiction among them, but only, as a suppliant and petitioner, made his request for the privilege of a burying-place in their lands. The title, therefore, which they gave him, must have a relation to some other thing which he did while he resided among them; and that most probably was, as a believer of the word of God, and a philosopher, he taught such as were disposed to hear him, the doctrine of the creation, the fall of man, the deluge, and that redemption which God had promised to guilty sinners.

As Abraham is the first to whom the Almighty is said to have appeared in the character of *Malack, Jehovah, or the Angel Jehovah*, it is highly probable that he instructed some of the Canaanites in the doctrine of the visible glory of God, which should afterwards be revealed in the person of the Messiah. Abraham, by heathen writers, is acknowledged to have been a person of great wisdom, and to have been the first that instructed the Chaldeans in the knowledge of God, and the principles of astronomy; and that, when he fled from his native land, and went down to Egypt, that he taught the Egyptians the same principles of knowledge that he taught his own people. Hence, they make this patriarch the father of the sciences, as well as the father of the faithful. A noted writer observes, the Abraham, born in the tenth generation after the

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the flood, was the inventor of astrology among the Chaldeans \*. Damascenus affirms that he came out of Chaldea with a great army, and reigned at Damascus ; from whence he passed into Canaan, and, on account of a famine, went down to Egypt, where he disputed with the priests, and instructed them in the principle of science, and in the doctrines of piety. To this patriarch some attribute the invention of the *Syriac letters*, and the invention of arithmetic ; from whence they conclude, that all the true learning after the flood was derived from the posterity of Shem, and that, in truth, all our knowledge is derived from either an immediate or traditional revelation. Whatever may be in this I will not positively determine ; but, it appears very plain, that Abraham was not only a righteous and religious man, but also a person of great understanding. He was acquainted with the police and government of countries, and managed all his affairs with discretion : among strangers he supported his character with dignity, and, when he was only a pilgrim and stranger, had so much influence as to appear like a prince among them, and obtain what he pleased, upon the simplest request. He was also acquainted with the art of war, and shewed the greatest valour and intrepidity ; he conquered four powerful kings, who had vanquished five princes, and brought back a rich spoil from the field of battle. But, above all, he was the friend of God,—the father of the faithful, and a type of  
our

\* Alexander Polyhistor.

our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. There are few greater characters than that of Abraham to be met with in history. He passed his pilgrimage in the fear of God, and ended his days in his favour, and rests in hope of the resurrection of the just.

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## LECTURE XII.

*An Account of ABRAHAM'S Family by KETURAH.—The History of the ISHMAELITES,—The SYRIANS.—An Account of the Family of JOB.—Who wrote the Book of JOB?—When he lived, &c.*

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GENESIS, XXV. 1, &c.—XXII. 20.

*Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.—*

*And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, behold Milcab, she also hath born children unto thy brother Nahor.*

THE Midianites, Ishmaelites, and Syrians, the posterity of Abraham, and his brother Nahor, are, in scripture, called *the children of the east*, because their place of residence lay eastward from *Palastine*, which was the country allotted to the posterity of Isaac. The posterity of Ishmael, and those Medianites, as they lay contiguous with the posterity of the ancient Syrians, being all blood-relations, were at first united as one people, distinguished by different names, into various tribes, having all similar, though distinct governments. It is usual for the scripture to call the places where those tribes dwelt, the land of such a tribe; which was also the manner of speaking concerning the tribes of Israel. We read of the land of *Judah*,



*Napthali*, and of *Galilee*, which were only *parts of Palaftine*, and when united, made the whole kingdom of *Israel*. The fame was customary in fpeaking of other eaſtern tribes.

Amongſt the ſons of Abraham, by Keturah, there are three, whoſe characters are of the greateſt repute in hiſtory, namely: *Midian*, *Shuah*, and *Sheba*. Each of theſe gave names to kingdoms in Arabia. The Medianites were a numerous people in the days of Moſes, and in the days of the Judges are ſaid to be *as the ſand of the ſea for numbers*.—The *Shuities*, in the times of Job, were well known among his friends, we find *Bildad the Shuite*, which plainly ſhews, that the family of *Shuah* had, at this period, given name to a tribe of Arabians. *Sheba*, in the times of Solomon, was well known to the people of *Israel* for its ſpices, and aromatic perfumes, but more eſpecially for a *Queen* who ruled in that country, and came to behold the *wiſdom of the king of Israel*.

This tribe were great plunderers of their brethren in ancient times; they are the *Sabeans*, which carried away Job's cattle, mentioned Job i. 15. *and ſlew the ſervants with the edge of the ſword*. It is thought, that on account of their frequent robberies and plunderings of their neighbours, that they were ſubdued by ſome of the neighbouring princes, and turned into a monarchy, as in the days of Solomon. The reſt of the ſons of Keturah either mingled with their brethren, or continued innocent and peaceable neighbours, of which there is little recorded in hiſtory.

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It is manifest, from the Hebrew word *Sheba*, in Job, that those persons called Sabeans, in our translation, were the Shebeans, and not the descendants of *Mibza*, the son of Ham, who dwelt in Ethiopia. That passage in Job should be read, *the children of Sheba fell upon them, and took them away, &c.* In the early periods of those eastern tribes, it is plain, from Scripture, that the Syrians, the children of Nahor, the posterity of Abraham, and the sons of Isaac, were in good correspondence with one another; and that, whatever might be the character of some tribes among each, that the general body, for a long time, adhered to one another. The reason why they were so unanimous against the children of Isaac, appears obvious; their fathers had disinherited them, and given the birth-right to the posterity of younger brethren, which naturally left an impression of disgust upon their minds. On this account, we find them unanimous in distressing the children of Israel, for many years.

Among the sons of Nahor (mentioned Gen. xxii. 20.), we find Uz, Buz, Kemuel, the father of Aram, and Bethuel, the father of Rebekah. Of the land of Uz Job was an inhabitant. The Shuites and the Buzites, at this time, appear to have been neighbours, for Elihu, the Buzite, of the kindred of Aram, was present with Bildad, the Shuite, in that long conversation with Job (mentioned, Job xxxii. 1.). They were all people of the east, of whom Job is said to have been both the most rich, and the most upright.

The friends of Job consisted of three distinct families; the family of Nahor, the family of Abra-

ham, and the family of Isaac. Bildad, the Shuite, was of the family of Abraham, by Keturah; Eliphaz, the Temanite, of the posterity of Esau; Elihu, of the posterity of Nahor; and Zophor, the Naamathite, of the same family. Naaman was long a noted name among the Syrians, even as far down as the days of Elisha, the prophet of Israel. That these tribes were mingled with one another is plain, from Gen. xxxvi. 3. for Esau is there said to have married Bathshemath, the daughter of Ishmael, the sister of Nebajoth, Ishmael's eldest son. Eliphaz was the eldest son of Esau, who had the name of *Temanite*, from *Tema*, of the posterity of Ishmael, into which family it is highly probable he married, and on that account is called a Temanite.

It will be easy now to settle the time when Job lived, by considering that Eliphaz was one of his friends, and the eldest son of Esau. This period will coincide with that of the bondage of Israel in Egypt; for we may reasonably suppose, that the sons of Esau lived as long as the sons of Jacob; and Eliphaz lived as long as Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob. It is then morally certain, that Job lived during the time that the children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt. Those who deny that there ever was such a man as Job, may, with equal wisdom, deny that there ever were such persons as Bildad, the Shuite; Zophar, the Naamathite; Eliphaz, the Temanite; or, Elihu the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram; or, that ever Noah, Daniel, and Job existed. We have no more certainty for the history of any of the ancient patriarchs than we have



ave for this righteous man in the land of Uz. His country, his character, his family, children, and estate, are as graphically pointed out as those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Esau; and it would make the book of Job a strange sort of a fable, if there never was such a man in the world. Such a fable would be contrary to all the rules of the drama, which generally establish fiction upon some certain truths in history.

That Job was an Arabian, and near to Tema and Sheba, appears from that description in his book, (chap. vi. 15, to the 20th), and makes it probable that he was a descendant of Abraham by Keturah, or of the family of Ishmael.—The Midianites, of whom it is most probable that Job was descended, were of two sorts, viz. merchants, and shepherds. When Jacob was in Canaan, we read of Midianites merchant-men, joined with Ishmaelites, carrying spicery, balm, and myrrh, from Gilead to Egypt, (Gen. xxxvii. 23, 28.) who *bought Joseph for twenty pieces of silver*. That they were shepherds is evident, from the history of Moses's father-in-law, whose flock Moses kept forty years. It was by the intercourse which the shepherds had with the merchants, that they obtained jewels of gold, precious stones, and bracelets; these were in general a lazy sort of people, and, on occasions, robbed the caravans in their way to Egypt. Of this sort were the troops of Tema and Sheba, who assembled to assault the merchants as they passed through the deserts.—To these Job refers in his *vish* chap. 19th ver.

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The government of these tribes seems to have been aristocratical, every tribe having its own leaders, which were called *Aluph*, or *rulers of a thousand*. In Edom they were called *dukes*, or *chiefs*, as appears from Gen. xxxvi. 17. In case of common danger they united, and were so many joined states, under one general, chosen to be head over the whole. I shall have occasion to consider the riches and government of the Midianites more fully, when I come to their war with the children of Israel.

*Job* seems to have been a chief man among the Midianites, both for riches and moral character. His wealth consisted in flocks, and herds, which, in these countries, were considered as great riches, as they really are in all nations, where sheep and cattle abound. He is commended as an *upright person* who *feared God and eschewed evil*; it is affirmed, that there were *none like him*, in that age, for *uprightness* of conduct, and purity of manners. His trials were indeed severe, but he had patience to bear them, and at last *the Lord delivered him out of them all*.

Who was the author of the book of *Job*, comes next under consideration. Some have ascribed it to *Moses*; and affirm, that he wrote it when he kept the flock of his *father-in-law*, in *Midian*; that the character of *Job*, was then fresh in every person's memory, and that, from materials which he gathered from *Jethro* and others in that country, he composed that book, and called it *Job*, from the name of the person who is the hero of the performance.

It appears more probable, that *Elihu* was the author of this book, and there is a part of his speech which confirms this opinion, Job xxxii. 15: *They were amazed, they answered no more, they left of speaking when I had waited, for they spake not, but stood still and answered no more.*

In this passage *Elihu* acts the part of an historian, as well as an actor in the drama. He not only is introduced as one of the speakers, but as one, who gives an account of what was *said by himself*, which is a very uncommon manner to one who only makes a speech. Moses might, probably, translate this book *from Arabic into Hebrew*, but it is not so probable that he wrote it at first, and was the author thereof. He could not, with any propriety, have put these words in the mouth of *Elihu*, which have been already quoted. One thing is certain, that whoever has been the author, the work abounds with *great* knowledge of GOD, and his works, and appears evidently to have been written before the giving of the law by Moses; for there is not the smallest reference to any Jewish ceremony or custom of the law, taken notice of in the whole book.

The writer has made mention of some matters of *astronomy*; which shews that there were observations made upon the stars in very ancient times, among the *Arabians*.—And the use to which he applies his knowledge, is *noble and excellent*. It is impossible to tell whether his sentiments or his poetry are finest. Our language cannot express the grandeur of the original Hebrew; whether it is an original or a translation, it is beyond the power of any



any modern tongue to display the beauty that is in it.

I shall give an example of the extraordinary expression of this author, in chapter ix. 9.

*Ashe as cecil ve-cima ve-chadre Teman.*

Which maketh *arcturus, orion, plciades, and the chambers of the south*. In our language the sentiment appears flat and heavy, but in the text it runs in iambics and dictyles, smooth and agreeable.

The book of Job shews, that the immortality of the soul and a state of rewards and punishments were known in the very early periods of the world; even among the Arabians, before Moses wrote his pentateuch; for there are some striking accounts of Job's faith in a Redeemer and Saviour, which was to come. Perhaps there is not stronger language in all the Old Testament, concerning the character and resurrection of Christ, than what is used in the xix. chapter of Job and 29 verse.—*I know, says he, that my Redeemer liveth, and he who is the last shall arise out of the dust, and though after both my skin and this flesh are consumed, I shall see God.* How vain and foolish is it then to affirm, that a future state of rewards and punishments was not known till after the Babylonish captivity? when it was so clearly understood among the Arabians, before the giving of the law? and considered as the chief comfort of people under affliction. Job knew the nature of an atonement for sin, and speaks clearly concerning it. Chapter xxxiii. 23. *If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand to shew unto men his uprightness; he is even gracious unto them, and saith, deliver them from the power of corruption*

*corruption I have found an atonement.* From the most early ages of the world, the idea of an atonement for transgression prevailed among all people where there was any knowledge of the Deity. Before the giving of the law to Moses, even among the tribes of the Arabs this doctrine of atonement prevailed. The people in Midian, and the adjacent parts, received this doctrine from Abraham: concerning whom the Lord declares, *that he knew that Abraham would command his house to serve the Lord.* It is plain, that the writer of Job considered an atonement as a satisfaction for a crime committed, and that remission of sin proceeded from a vicarious price of redemption, for this is the signification of the Hebrew word *Copher*, both in Job xxxiii. 24. and Exodus xxi. 30.

All who have read Job, generally agree that there are many sublime doctrines contained in it; but many have been so foolish, and inconsiderate, as to contend more concerning the author, and the time when it was written, than to enquire concerning the divine truths contained therein. Of all the opinions that have yet been given concerning the author of this sublime performance, none carries so much probability in them, as that which makes Elihu the writer of that book; for the 15, 16, and 17 verses of the xxxii chap. plainly point him out as the author of the book of Job. As Elihu was a Buzite, of the kindred of Ram, or Aram, he was of consequence a Syrian by extraction, of the family of Nahor, the brother of Abraham, and most probably wrote this book in the Syriac language, or in some dialect thereof, which, in those early times,

would but differ little from the Hebrew. As the Midianites, Ishmaelites, and Syrians, were long a mixed people, and dwelt towards the east of Palestine, they are often-times in Scripture called the children of the east; but the word in our bibles, which is rendered *east*, signifies more properly *antiquity* [*Kedem*], and so that passage in Job will read, so that this man was the greatest man of all the sons of antiquity; that, among all the ancients, there were none greater than Job, whether he is considered as a holy, rich, or patient man.

That Moses might translate this performance for the benefit of his countrymen in Egypt, to fortify their minds during the trials they met with in their coming out of the land of bondage, and while they travelled in the wilderness forty years, is a more probable conjecture than that the book of Job was written by Ezra, for the benefit of the Israelites, after the time of the Babylonish captivity.

The knowledge of a future state of rewards and punishments, with many other essential doctrines of religion, seem to have been well known in the days of Job, and appear to have been the sole comfort of good men in the time of great affliction. When all the comforts which Job had in the world were taken from him, he looked forward to an immortal life, which he was persuaded he should enjoy after his flesh and his reins were consumed. He speaks also of the Messiah as his kinsman-redeemer, whom, he believed, would, after having suffered for sin, be raised up out of the dust of the earth. He speaks of his Saviour in very strong and explicit terms.—

I know



I know, says he, that my kinsman-redeemer is *alive, or liveth just now*, and that the *Acheron*, or *Omega*, shall rise out of the dust of the earth,—and though, after my skin, the worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself and not another, though my reins be consumed within me. There are three things in these words of Job very manifest: 1. That he believed that his goal, or kinsman Saviour, was alive when he spake these words. 2. That he was persuaded that he should come into the world, *die*, and *rise* out of the *dust of the earth*. 3. That though *he himself* should die, and his flesh and reins should be consumed by worms, yet he should see God in that very flesh which he was then a partaker of.—And; we may add, that Job believed, that when the *Acheron* or *Omega* should come, he would make God visible to all the understandings of his people; and that *seeing of his kinsman-redeemer* would be the *same as the seeing of God*. I have considered the Hebrew word *Acheron*, which in our translation is rendered *the latter day*, to be a name or character of the Messiah whom Job is speaking of, because this name is given him by the prophets, and assumed by himself in the New Testament \*. *Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his KINSMAN-REDEEMER, the Lord of Hosts; I am [RISHON] the first, and I am [ACHERON] the last, and besides me there is no God. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end †.* None can, from henceforth, pretend to say that I have

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offered

\* Isa. xlv. 6.

† Rev. i. 8.

offered an improbable opinion, when the prophet Isaiah, and the evangelist John, have confirmed the same sentiment in express terms. It must certainly be more consistent to quote divine authority for any opinion, than to endeavour to confirm our conjectures by fallible fathers of the church, erroneous bishops, or unbelieving pagans. It appears to have as much probability as the nature of the subject requires, that the book of Job was written by Elihu,—that Job believed in the then present existence of a Redeemer, and in his coming into the world to die and to rise again ;—that this book of Job is the most ancient of any in Scripture, and that a future state of rewards and punishments is plainly taught therein ;—and, that it is highly absurd to affirm, that a future state of rewards and punishments was not taught to the vulgar till after the Babylonish captivity, seeing the book and patience of Job was well known before that period among the Jews.

Such as deny the existence of Job, and consider this book as a religious fable, may, with equal sagacity, deny all things that they have not seen, or that have not happened within their own memory, and personal knowledge. Such can only be considered in a state of lunacy, or madness, and ought to be dealt with as such. That this book is written in a dramatic form, or by way of dialogue, is very plain to every reader ; and, that a great part of it is poetry, all who can read Hebrew will soon perceive ; yea, even the English reader may easily discern such images as are not to be met with in the finest English poets,—and, it is also plain, that our  
purest

purest poems are much indebted to this sublime and masterly composition. What are all the jingling rhymes of Pope and Gay, and our other English poets to the last six chapters of the book of Job? And what would their finest poems have been, had they not seen the holy Scriptures? One of the finest poems in the English language is Thomson's *Seasons*, and the most beautiful parts thereof are formed upon the Scriptures. His story of Lavinia is only a sort of parody upon the history of Ruth and Boaz, and is one of the most finished paragraphs in the whole *Seasons*. But comparisons of this sort are rather odious,——for the holy spirit gives such vigour to scripture poetry, that all imitations fall infinitely short of the original. There is one observation I cannot help making, viz. that the Holy Ghost does not seem to improve, in the progress of divine writing, as men do in arts and learning, but is as good in the beginning as in after compositions. This shews the perfection of divine knowledge, and, that the Deity does not, like man, learn wisdom by experience. The book of Job, which is one of the most ancient divine compositions, is as perfect in its kind, as any other of all the books of scripture. It will be found, upon enquiry, that the sacred writings do not partake of the wisdom, or learning of the amanuensis, but are solely directed by the unerring spirit of truth; and there are many as *noble, sublime, and elegant sentiments*, in the writings of those scripture authors, that were accounted *illiterate*, as in the compositions of those who are reckoned persons of *learning and science*. Among the prophets, *Amos* was of this  
ort,



fort, who though he was only a herdman, and a gatherer of *sycomore fruit*, yet, by *divine* inspiration, he has uttered sentiments, equal in sublimity to any in the Old Testament.—And in the epistles of *Peter* and *John* there are sentiments, and a manner of writing, equal to any thing that has been attributed to this apostle Paul, or any other New Testament writer.

It is not a little surprizing to find some of the friends of the divine revelation, joining with its enemies in the opinion that some of the scripture authors have written better than others; or, at least, in a more *masterly stile*, or in a purer manner of composition;—when yet there cannot *one* example be given to shew, that the *evangelist Luke* wrote better Greek than *John*, or *Paul* wrote better than *Peter*;—or, that the *Hebrew* of *Amos* is any worse than the *Pentateuch* of *Moses*. A reader, whose imagination has been corrupted by long reading Heathen authors, and dwelling upon what are called the *beauties* and *sublimities* of stile, and composition in those writers, are ready to consider the *scripture language*, as a very strange sort of composition; but it is easy to give a reason for this kind of partiality;—they are totally ignorant of the nature of the subjects treated in those divine books, and cannot conceive how such modifications of Greek words and dialects are applied to such subjects.—The very same stile in a heathen writer, would be admired by those readers, and the words considered as exceedingly proper, but when found in a scripture book, they are oftentimes called flat, improper, and receive the name of *sollicisms*. It has, by critics,

critics, been long considered as a beauty and excellency in composition, when the *sound* is an *echo* to the *sense* of what is spoken. Homer is admired for this, and particularly in that well known line, Βῆ δ' ἀκίων παρὰ θινὰ πολυφλοσβοίῳ θαλάσσης *But pensive walked along the founding shore.* It is very plain that the dialect, in which Homer wrote, and the manner in which he varied his terminations, to humor his subject, were allowed by the genius of that tongue; and answered the purpose of making the sound, in some measure, an echo to the sense. But almost all Greek writers have done the same in different degrees, according as their genius, and their subject would permit. But there is a paragraph in the gospel of Matthew, which, if any one pleases to turn it into a sort of verse, is equal to that famous line of Homer.

Καὶ ἰδοὺ σεισμός μέγας ἐγγενέτο τὸ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ  
ὥστε τὸ πλοῖον καλυπτεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν κυμάτων \*.

Better words cannot be chosen to express the distress of a ship at sea, and the raging of a storm, —and I might have added, that the poetry is nothing inferior to that of Homer, though it was not professedly written in that character. I mention these things to shew, that religious persons may find in *their books*, as fine an entertainment to their taste, as infidels can find in the Heathen writers, and in many instances a *more excellent* entertainment of the same kind. Any sober man would be

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\* Matt. viii. 24.

surprized, provided he did not find it too common, to see the libraries of young men and women stuffed with a set of authors that they reckon fine stile, and elegant composition, when yet the very things they admire are *mere whiffles*, that cannot abide *reflections*, nor a *second reading*.

During the time that the church of God was domestic, in particular families we find, that the favours of God were not confined even to the *seed of Abraham*; but that among the various tribes of *Arabians*, which then went by the name of *Ishmaelites*, *Midianites*, *Moabites*, and *Amelekites*, there were eminent men, who knew the will of the Almighty, and were in their generation *remarkable* for righteousness and purity. Though *Job* and his friends are only mentioned in the book which bears his name, we are not to imagine that these were all among the children of the east, that feared God. These are mentioned as *the most remarkable*, and *shining characters*, and afford a reason for us to believe, that where there were such a number of excellent men, there would, no doubt, be a great many more of inferior characters, who would imitate them, and learn from their precepts and examples.—And it is not altogether unprobable, that in these parts, at this day, there are some who are favoured with the knowledge of God, in such a manner, as is necessary to guide them in the paths of righteousness to an happy immortality. To that part of the world we have been indebted for many excellent and useful things: from thence first came the promises of life and immortality, and from the *Arabians* came to *Europe* some useful discoveries  
in



in medicine, and the *artem medeni*. Those who choose to read *Doctor Friend's History of Medicine*, will find this observation clearly confirmed. It is beside my present purpose to give a full *history of Job*, or to offer all the remarks that might be useful to this audience from that book which bears his name. A few things shall suffice at this time. In his time, and in his country, the practice of burnt-offering appears to have been common ; for, after days of feasting, Job is said to have offered burnt-offerings for his sons, lest they should have cursed God in their hearts. It would appear, that there has always been danger in too much festivity ; and that, on those occasions, men are ready to be off their guard, and are inclined to think and speak unadvisedly. Social entertainments, when guided by the rules of moderation, is good and necessary to shew friendship, and to open the affections of the human heart ; but, when festivity is carried the length of voluptuousness, *it enflames the passions, fires the appetites*, and corrupts the mind. If occasional feasting were carried on with decency among friends, and made an opportunity of increasing brotherly affection, it would answer a noble purpose. The primitive Christians had their love-feasts, when they eat and drank together, to promote brotherly affection ; and, there is no reason to suppose, that, though they observed moderation, that they confined themselves to a mere form of eating and drinking, but enjoyed themselves fully, and took as much indulgence as lay within the line of temperance and purity. When persons of affluence call their friends to an entertainment,

they ought to treat them according to their circumstance and condition, and not shew the narrowness of their souls by the scrimpness of entertainment ;—this would frustrate the end of festivity, which is love. It is not a little strange that luxury should put an end to hospitality, which is always the case ; for luxury has something the appearance of being hospitable ; but the difference lies in this, that luxury is confined to men's own appetites, and hospitality is directed to the welfare of others. In the ancient history of nations we often hear of grand entertainments, and great hospitality practised among the ancients, when yet they lived frugally, and were far removed from almost every species of luxury. These happened only when friends met, and proceeded from the effusions of friendship, which the presence of friends produced in the minds of generous men. In the days of Abraham, they made no account of killing a calve to entertain three strangers, which one would think bordered rather upon extravagance than hospitality. But, we are to remember, that though strangers were the immediate objects of hospitality, yet, on such occasions, the rest of the family were made to taste of the fruits of the landlord's beneficence ; and, when his heart was open, he made his domesticks, who were at hand, taste of the sweets of the festivity, and set them an example to be kind to strangers, by giving them of those good things that he prepared on such an occasion.

At first view, one would be ready to imagine that the patriarchs were very extravagant eaters, when they made ready so much meat for a few persons ;

fons; but, the reason of preparing so much food was, that the whole of the family might be partakers, and that there might be no signs of selfishness, nor partiality, in the behaviour of the master of the feast. Before luxury came to a great height in Britain, there was nothing more common than for intimate friends and relations to visit at one another's houses, when the whole domesticks belonging to the family were entertained on the occasion, and the whole house was merry.—But, in those times, the ordinary fare of families was simple, and no ways expensive,—they lived according to nature, upon the produce of the country, and knew nothing of those exotics which luxury and trade have produced. Those ancients *really enjoyed a feast* which their corrupted children cannot enjoy; for, as their *appetites were pure*, and *their stomachs sound*, a feast was then an extraordinary change of diet, and a great rarity. But in modern times mankind feast every day, and there is nothing but something of the same sort to be had at the greatest entertainment. The taste of men is paled by the frequent repetition of dainty things, and they long to vary *one luxury for another*, without ever thinking of returning to the *simplicity of nature*. Another thing, which rendered the ancients both healthy, hospitable, and capable of enjoying festivity, was,—the exercise they took to themselves. Though their labour was not so severe as the labour of *menial servants is now*, yet there were none but enjoyed such an exercise as was healthful to the body; and there were few idle employments. The Midianitish merchants travelled from one country to another, and



did not stand loitering behind counters, like modern tradesmen; nor does it appear, even in our own country, that it was necessary to coup up such a number of young men and women in shops, till laziness and luxury became predominant. The great towns in Britain are little better than the cloisters in Spain with regard to population, and the enjoyments of mankind; for, it cannot be expected, where such a number of men and women are confined to the house, that they either will enjoy good health, or long life. With regard to the males, the modern practice of business has a very pernicious effect; for they are in so many instances confined to converse only with females, that they lose all manliness of spirit, and have no taste for those exercises which render them brave, generous, and humane. Our modern histories afford us no such instances of hospitality, bravery, and generosity, as in the days of Abraham; when men feasted from a principle of manly affection, and entertained strangers from the noble principle of generosity.

That original practice of feasting proceeded from a mutual regard that friends had to one another, and was only practised occasionally, lest, by too much use, the relish should decay, and it should rather become riot and gluttony than friendly intercourse. It is by the abuse of good things that men first fall into error; witness, our first parents *eating the forbidden fruit*. They abused *their liberty*, and by that means *lost it*.—In those ancient times, the feelings of friendship appear to have been stronger than in our modern times. Job's three friends came to visit him in his distress, and sat  
silent

silent beside him seven days before they spoke one word, because his grief was great;—and, though in their conversation they seem to have misunderstood his character and meaning, yet, it is plain, they intended the whole as friendship to Job. While persons live in simplicity of manners, according to the principles of nature and religion, their feelings are more pure, and more easily affected; but, after men are immersed in luxury, and create new appetites by unlawful and unnatural gratifications, the natural feelings are blunted, and men feel very little pain at the distress or loss of friends. Experience shews us that among the peasants, that live in the remotest parts of the country, there are real expressions of grief at the loss and distress of friends and relations, while the people in high rank shew no manner of concern for the loss of a friend, except by changing the colour of their clothes, or using some insignificant formalities. I do not intend to make a commentary upon the book of Job, but only to shew the simplicity of those ancient times, and the good sense of mankind, while they remained uncorrupted by luxury and vicious customs. In those days shepherds, and wandering tribes of Arabians, appear to have known more of their Creator, and the intention of his works, than is now to be found in any university in Europe, or in any society of learning at present in the world. The writer of the book of Job makes his characters speak in such a style, concerning all sublime subjects, as no modern pen can imitate. Whatever comes in the way, in the course of conversation, whether with regard to natural history,

history, philosophy, astronomy, or divinity, is all delivered in character, and with great exactness.— But, when he comes to the speech of the Almighty, his language transcends all human conception;— yea, he even makes *the horse* speak in a *finer style* than ever Demosthenes, Cicero, or Longinus, were able to utter. All the striking apostrophes of these renowned orators, are not to be compared with that which this writer puts in the mouth of the horse, Job xxxix. 25. He sayeth, among the trumpets, *ha! ha!* These interjections come in so *apropos*, that their beauty arises from the surprize they create at an animal speaking, which we know is naturally mute. All the quotations, from poets and orators, that are made by Longinus, are not to be compared to those sublime and beautiful passages in the book of Job.

It is manifest, that the knowledge of fighting with horses is very ancient. The book of Job describes it most magnificently. The whole description of the horse is exceedingly grand. *Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with the fierceness of his rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of a trumpet. He sayeth, among the trumpets, ha! ha! and he smelleth*



*leth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting* \*. Whatever improvements the moderns have made upon arts and sciences, it does not appear that they are the real inventors of many arts, or if any at all; for there are scarcely any things that we now know, but there are some hints concerning them to be found in the writings of the ancients. The book of Job is almost an *encyclopedia*, for it contains every branch of knowledge that is almost to be found. Many moderns have, on this account, been tempted to imagine, that it is a later performance than it really is, on account of the great knowledge that is discovered in it; but they have forgotten that God was always equally wise, and as that book is the dictates of the holy spirit, we must conclude, that the first knowledge of all things was from God.

In reading the history of the ancient patriarchs one cannot help admiring that rural, and pleasant life which they led, and could almost wish that there had never been any *cities*, or *great towns* in the world. The animated and pleasant account which is given of their manner of life in scripture, is so *natural* and *affecting*, that of all sorts of reading, there is none so entertaining, as that which relates to those pastoral ages. The *Heathen poets* have taken the *finest flowers* and *figures* in their compositions from the history of those delightful ages. *Theocritus* and *Virgil* particularly have attempted to riddle the *flowers* and *rose buds* of those *rural* and *delightful scenes*, described by the ancients. To  
live

\* Job, xxxix. 19.

live continually in view of the objects of nature, adds a vigour to the mind, that all strictures of art cannot produce. A garden will ever give more pleasure than a palace, and a rural wild than a garden. A *tuberoſe*, in the *deſarts of Arabia*, will ſmell ſweeter than the fineſt flower in the beſt cultivated garden.

Such as have been, in their youth, brought up in the country, will always remember thoſe natural ſcenes of innocence, where once they had their walks with a ſort of pleaſure, that all the ſpeculations of philoſophy cannot produce. No abſtract reaſoning upon the works of God can produce ſuch pleaſure, as the ſimple looking at them can produce. they have a ſort of inſtinctive influence that is irreſiſtible, that gives a pleaſure that no perſon can account for, unleſs it is affirmed that the Deity is beſt perceived in his own works. The view of a *ſtrangled meadow*, or the reſreſhing flavour of a *ſpringing wood* will affect the ſenſes, and chear the mind, better than all the regular works of art in the world; and *the wild notes of the grove*, will give a finer ſenſation than all the regular quavers of Leoni, or the fineſt performer in any of the theatres.

What is moſt remarkable in thoſe times of rural innocence is, war was but ſeldom practiſed, unleſs when *builders of cities*, and founders of empires, diſturbed the peace of thoſe innocent ſhepherds. While the patriarchs, and thoſe wandering tribes kept at a diſtance from towns, we ſeldom hear of any war among them, unleſs what was deſenſive. They were never the aggreſſors, though, upon occaſions, they

they made a good defence. A description of this rural and peaceful age, or what is similar to it, may be seen, in a note, at the foot of the page \*.— Where men follow nature, religion appears more lively, and simple in the practice; and any strict observer will easily perceive that religious men, in the country,

\* Peace, gentle goddess, daughter of fair truth,  
Permit the doric reed to sing thy praise;  
Assist my muse thy blessings to describe,  
And, by thy beauties, put the sons of strife  
To shame; that all may cease their hostile aims,  
And live in concord and delight in peace.

By *thee* the various tribe of human-kind  
Enjoy their own, nor dread the rage of war.  
By *thee* the swain, as yet untaught to broil,  
Leads forth his joyful flock unto the plain;  
Fearless of guile, and chearful as the spring:  
Mirthful his soul, and, like the morning gay,  
He sweetly sings his mattins on the lea;  
Or, whistles treble to the stock-dove's song.  
Sweet fumes impregnant from the flow'ry mead,  
Wasted along with many healthful breeze,  
Refresh his spirits; and the nimble gales,  
Loaded with aromatic odours, bring  
Fresh exhalations, ruffled from the flowers.  
His every sense has objects near at hand,  
Fram'd by all bounteous heav'n, fraught with joy.  
Nature's gay dress in variegated hue,  
But chiefly green, enchants the staring eye,  
And many thousand herbs, and good for food,  
Grow wild; might serve a king to taste,  
If ever taste had been the lot of kings.  
From every spray, in either hedge or grove,  
His ear meets music, ravishingly sweet;



country, are more sincere and simple in their behaviour, than those in towns and cities. They have not such a complicated and suspicious appearance as those who are every day upon their guard against *villany*, and are maintaining a sort of *warfare* against both the *good* and the *bad*. *Habitual traffic insensibly*

And from the scented brier and fragrant thorn,  
Each breeze comes fraughted with the choice of smells.  
All, all, is feeling powerfully impress'd,  
To lead through nature, up to nature's God.

His flocks conspire with all the sweets of spring,  
To pour each grateful pleasure on his soul.  
The tender lambkins bleat the ewes return,  
A kind response, the very voice of nature.  
They scatter round the hill's down-slanting side  
To crop the heath, or on some grassy bogue  
Taste the delicious herb, the soul of health.

Or when the sun ascends meridian high,  
And darts his rays direct upon the plain,  
When sultry heat reflects back from the heath,  
They seek the fountain, or the purling stream,  
To cool their parched jaws, and quench their thirst:  
Or, 'mongst the oozy brakes, or bramble shades  
They hide themselves, to cheat the sun a while.  
Yet social taught by nature, with a word  
The shepherd calls the distant wand'ers in.

How sweet to see the tender lambkins sport?  
By instinct taught to gamble o'er the plain;  
Or, on some burn-bank, where void of fear,  
The little coursers strive, as for a prize,  
Who first shall reach the goal, which nature taught.  
This rural innocence affords the mind  
The sweetest delectation, and content:

The

bly leads men to the practice of *cunning*, so that frequently the little sincerity they have at first, *gradually decays*, till *flattery* and *adulation* becomes *constitutional*, and they seldom know when they are playing the hypocrite. This is the reason that the greatest part of all the remarkable good men, that  
we

The moralizing powers have objects near,  
The purest and refin'd to feed reflection.  
Each sense hath premises arround to draw  
Conclusions, suited for the soul's delight:  
What meets the ear, or eye, or taste, or smell,  
Is all impregnate with the purest blest.

When by the sun's decline the shadows grow,  
Long and gigantic, and, to fancy's view,  
Hills, woods, and trees, and men, and beasts seem monsters,  
The swain brings near his cattle to the fold,  
And flocks come bleating near their nightly fence:  
Nigh the delightful skirts of some sweet wood,  
Where murmuring runs a pleasant little rill,  
The shepherd tunes his gladsome pipe and plays:  
The lambkins skip and dance with mirthful glee,  
And one would think they danc'd because he play'd.  
Yet nature, and no rules of art, directs  
These harmless dancers; for 'tis instinct all.  
The thrush and black-bird warble on the spray,  
And raise their wild notes loudly to the sky;  
The lark and linnet chant amidst the grove,  
And chirp their treble to the cushnet's bass:  
The cuckoo sings his old trite song anew,  
A dismal ditty to the married tribe;  
But yet unfeard, where gentle peace doth dwell,  
The universal concert all conspire  
To form a perfect diapason sound.  
How pleas'd and healthful are the sons of peace,

we read of in scripture, were either *shepherds, fishermen*, or such as lived remote from traffic, and places of great concourse.

But, I shall conclude this discourse by observing, that did persons who are confined to places of public concourse, make rural ideas more familiar, they would

Who thus unstain'd enjoy the sweets of nature?  
 Their minds all social uncorrupt with vice.  
 Spend every hour with unenexed joy.  
 Nor pride, nor fell ambition spoil their rest,  
 Sweet are their slumbers, for their mind's at ease.  
 What though hard labour shou'd fatigue their limbs,  
 The sweeter is their rest, and practice shews  
 To them, untaught, what learned men know seldom,—  
 True self enjoyment, th' very soul of life.  
 Their sense of right and fear of ill proceeds  
 Not from that airy phantom Speculation,  
 But from the feeling of a natural good,  
 Impress'd on all the object of their notice.  
 They do what's good, because that goodness acts  
 By pleasing, striking objects on their mind:  
 Their hearts are form'd simple, good, and kind,  
 Because they ne'er were taught what's false and vile.  
 A simple innocence devoid of guile,  
 And, though untry'd, is yet divinely good.  
 Such life's an image of those golden days,  
 The theme of ancient song, which bards in rapture  
 Sung, and though they never say them, yet rejoic'd  
 To think that once they were; the very thoughts of  
 virtue  
 Tune the soul, and oil the springs of life.

Ah little do they know the sweets of life!  
 Who, kennel'd thick within the city walls,  
 Feast every day their minds, with greedy care,

On



would be both better men, and have more pure enjoyments. A view of the works of God in their *natural simplicity*, would animate the mind with a vigour that *profit cannot give, nor life take away*. When physicians order people in the town to go to the country to recover their health, it is but seldom that

On poisonous politics, the bane of peace.  
Those who have hearts and patience to be kings,  
Or favourites minion-rid, whose empty souls  
Snuff flatt'ry, as the mountain asses wild  
Snuff up the air, live meanly, when compar'd  
With peaceful peasants, nourished with truth.  
Tyrants may boast when bribery's sons cringe low,  
To pick the sordid scantlings of their power,  
And count it happiness for to be fear'd  
By those who rake the kennels of a court,—  
The scavengers of every lord in place;  
But short his peace, and happiness must be,  
Conscious that whom he trusts are rogues in grain.  
Who watcheth thieves his rest's but ill secur'd,  
And small his happiness who thinketh ill.  
Mean are the pleasures of a tyrant's mind,  
Whose joy it is to couple men like dogs  
In chains; and when they lose the scent, to hang,  
Or scourge them for their want of sense.  
But when two rivals meet, whose lust of power,  
And int'rest, hang in equal-poised scales,  
Then hell breaks loose; and truth and peace takes flight;  
Forsoke the earth, and wing their way to heav'n.

Free'd from the dread of bloody savage war,  
His summer task, the eager swain pursues,  
'Tending his flocks, or fallowing down his field,  
Wise to provide against fierce winter's wants.  
No sound of trumpet or the noise of drums,

that the physician or patient understands what it is in the country produces the cure. They generally mention the salubrity of the air, which is only one ingredient in the medicine, but they seldom consider that the objects of nature work as much upon the mind, as the air does upon the body. In the spring nature is blooming, in summer she is gay—In harvest

The awful signs of war, disturb his peace :  
 While chearful on the mountain's sunny brow ;  
 Or, on the heathy plains he feeds his lambs  
 New wean'd, and sees them crop the tender ling ;  
 Or, with his crooked plough upon the plain,  
 Turns up the globe to see the summer sun.  
 At noon a simple plain repast regales  
 His spirits ; cruel'd milk or Cheese well prest,  
 With a good lusty round of massin loaf,  
 Drives hunger far away. Wrapt in his plaid  
 He takes his mid-day nap, and soundly sleeps,  
 Because his mind's at ease. Fell cares encroach not  
 On his rest ; souls void of guile, feel no molest,  
 Nor vexing envy prying in their mind.  
 Untaught through spleen to view with lustful eye  
 What's not his own, he spies his neighbour's weal  
 And feels no pain, but joys to see him thrive.  
 Envy and curs'd ambition only lodge  
 Where courtiers dwell, or near the seat of kings,  
 Where every man's preterment is a dart,  
 Sharp piercing in his neighbours envious soul.  
 Sometimes behind the counter these black cares,  
 When rival shops contiguous face the eye,  
 Or rival interests meet, anon creep in ;  
 Then woful pangs insue in spleen-sick souls,  
 Who always fever at their neighbour's weal.  
 But little do they know the sweets of peace.

Whose

vest she is rich, and in winter solemn, and each of these views will answer the purpose of health, to some persons,—and the physician ought to enquire into their taste, as well as their disease, for without considering this, the town will often answer the same end as the country. The ancients knew these things well, but the moderns have forgot them.

Whose selfish prospects mar their daily ease ;  
Whose souls, like a wide gulph, would all devour ;  
Still gape for more, yet never rest content.  
The Hebrew king of Sapience profound  
In parable divine did well describe  
Such envious minds, and aptly them compar'd  
To sucking leaches, that are never full.

When sol's bright car whirls swiftly down the west,  
And the fierce steeds seem ardent for to plunge  
Themselves precipitant in oceans deep,  
And scarce three ells of measurement appear  
Between the west'ren sea, and the sun's disk :  
Tall shadows from the mountains tops descend,  
And the high stately hills spread darkness round,  
All but the side where Phoebus' scancing rays  
Obliquely fall, and shew the approach of night.  
Then the attentive swains drive home their flocks,  
And cows, with pond'rous duggs press'd hard, to where  
The buxome lasses with their milking pails  
Are wont to meet ; the well known loan,  
Where many a merry country catch go round,  
With mirthful glee, and with as little guile.



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## LECTURE XIII.

*The Conclusion of the History and Character of ABRAHAM.—The Character of his Servant, ELIEZER.—The Marriage of his Son, ISAAC.—Observations upon the Oath his Servant swore.—The Marriages of the Ancients.—The Death of ABRAHAM.*

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*And Abraham was old and well stricken in age:  
and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.*

*And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house,  
that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee,  
thy hand under my thigh:*

*And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of  
heaven and the God of the earth, that thou shalt  
not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of  
the Canaanites among whom I dwell, &c.*

ABRAHAM, like many of the ancient patriarchs, was not only careful to rule his family with discretion, in the fear of God, when he was alive, but was anxious that his posterity should pursue the same practice after he was gone. This patriarch had only *one son*, to whom the promise belonged, and of him he was *peculiarly careful*: he was the son of his *old age*, the child of his *prayers*, and the *son of the promise*. Wherever the fear of God  
has

has prevailed, in all ages of the world people have been careful to avoid marriages with unbelievers and infidels. The people where Abraham now was, though they were discreet enough in their behaviour towards him, yet were infidels with regard to his manner of worshipping the true God; he therefore would not suffer his son Isaac to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. The apostles of Christ, and the first Christians, were possessed of the same spirit; they considered it to be a sin to be unequally yoked with unbelievers; and the apostle Paul has given his authority against this practice. There is nothing that argues more a real want of true religion, than that of forming such a near connection with infidels, as that of marriage. A profession of godliness is at least necessary in those with whom religious persons form such a connection.

The Syrians, who, at this time, were of the same religion with Abraham, and had come out of Ur of the Chaldees for the same reason that he did, tho' it was not long till they fell into great corruptions, were the only people with whom he thought proper to unite his son in the solemn tie of matrimony. The family of Nahor worshipped the true God, and as yet held the belief of the unity of the Deity. It was for this reason that Abraham was so anxious that his son should have a wife from among his friends. There is no question that if Abraham had consulted the worldly interest of his son Isaac, but he might have found a better match for him among the people of the land where he then resided; and as they had an high esteem for our patriarch, they would not have refused his son one of the first for-

tunes in that country. But Abraham had by this time been sufficiently acquainted with their manners, and behaviour, and perceived the danger of such a connection to his son. Besides, he also knew that the land of Canaan was not yet to be given to his posterity, and therefore would not mingle interests with the people of the land, lest it might make them endeavour to anticipate the promise, and offend God. The grand object which Abraham and all the patriarchs had in view, was, to make their conduct agree with the promise of God, and they walked as those who firmly believed what Jehovah had spoken unto them.

Isaac's future fortune, depended upon the promise, and not upon any connection he could form in Canaan; and, as obedience to the commandments of God, and the fulfilling of the promise kept pace with one another, it was the principal study of those faithful men to testify that they believed God, by keeping his commandments. They never expected that the divine promise was to be accomplished without means of divine appointment; they therefore connected, in faith and practice, the means and the end, the promise of God, and their own duty.

When Abraham wanted to have his son married, he committed the management of this business to a principal servant, whom he once expected would have been his heir; his name was *Eliezer*, a native of Damascus. There are few people that would choose to put such confidence in a servant as to commit such a trust into their hands as the marriage of an only son;—and there are but few servants worthy



thy of such confidence as Abraham reposed in Eliezer. But the patriarch had known him long,—he was an old servant, and always behaved faithfully. You may almost determine the character of the master from the servants he keeps. A wise and prudent master will always employ honest and worthy servants, and will not have his household composed of fools, knaves, and sycophants, if he can possibly avoid it. Abraham was a wise, religious, and good master, who suffered his servants to live easily in his service; they found in him as much of the father as the master. He considered their interests as his own, and they accounted his service not like the servitude of slaves, but the exercise of children. Their obedience was not a task but a pleasure, for they loved their master well, and he deserved it. The fear of the Lord will always make a master gentle, and make him remember that servants are flesh and blood as well as himself. It is an hard matter for rational creatures to labour from morning to night like oxen, and have always before their eyes the same return of labour when the day breaks. Hours of rest, and relaxation from labour, and some days of enjoyment, are necessary for servants to render their lives agreeable, and to make them serve with pleasure. The man that must always start with the dawn of the morning, and is obliged to labour till the twilight, otherwise receive no wages, will never love his master. Nature does not require, and the Almighty never commands a man to be a slave, provided he can be free. Servants ought to have no task imposed upon them that makes life burdensome, and time wearisome.

It is impossible they can serve God and love their master, when their bodies are oppressed with hard labour. The lusts and appetites of the great frequently are so ill to gratify, that the whole labour of the community is not able to supply them. Hence, peasants and tradesmen are obliged to labour incessantly to answer their demands, and to drudge from morning to night, not so much to supply their own wants, as to provide for the luxury of licentious despots, who never thank them for their labour. The fear of the Lord in the heart of a master would remedy this evil; for no man that believes, as Abraham did, that his master is in heaven, will ever be oppressive to his servants, or tyrannical to his domestics. A man, who has servants under him, ought always to remember, whether his master, who is in heaven, has laid as heavy a task upon him as he lays upon his servants; or, whether he labours as hard in the service of God, as he wants his servants to labour for him.—And also, he ought to consider, in case Providence should alter its course, and put him in the situation of a servant, whether he would not desire to have some abatement of the rigour he practices towards others. Abraham's severest commandment to his house seems to have been that they should fear Jehovah; he was sure this was the beginning of wisdom, and when this was rightly understood, he had no doubt concerning the behaviour of his family. Without this he knew nothing would do.

In the whole history of Abraham we never read of any discord in his family, except what happened between Sarah and her maid Hagar, which was soon settled

settled by the prudence of the patriarch. All his domestics seem to have been exceedingly happy under his authority. It is plain that he allowed them time to serve God as well as to perform the service due to him; and, there is no manner of doubt but the good old patriarch had pleasure in the ease and prosperity of his servants. When servants are well used they seldom think of becoming masters themselves; but, when they are oppressed, they become weary of servitude. There is an instance of this in *slaves* that are severely used; they frequently rise against their masters,—but, when they are used gently, they are seldom weary of their service, and obey freely. There are few masters now that have *three hundred servants*, that are purely managed by the influence of the fear of God as those of Abraham were. But, this shews us the possibility of managing even a numerous family without rigour and severity.

I have mentioned one reason why Abraham would not have his son to take a wife of the daughters of the land where he then dwelt; namely, because they did not worship the true God.—But, there is another reason may be given why he would not unite with them in such a solemn manner,—they were far gone in all sorts of wickedness. The sins of Sodom were very abundant among the Canaanites, and all sorts of uncleanness were practised among them. It was for these abominations that they were driven out of that land, and totally overthrown by Joshua, when their cup was full. For such impure abominations, the Lord informs the Israelites that the land spued out its inhabitants.

The



The patriarch, who feared the Lord, knew that nothing was more likely to seduce his son, from the worship of the true God, and the practice of virtue, than to be connected with a people, and married to a wife, that was abandoned in her principles. There are too many instances in history of the fatal influence of bad wives over their husbands. Abraham had not forgot the *fate of the old world*, and the *destruction of Sodom*: these dreadful *catastrophes* were still recent in his memory.— He also knew that the Canaanites would be driven out of their land on account of their abominations, and did not incline that the *son of the promise* should be connected with such an abandoned and wicked people.

When Abraham sent away his servant to Mesopotamia, he did it with great solemnity. He gave him a solemn charge, and made him swear an oath. He caused him to swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that he should not take a wife to his son from among the Canaanites, but that he should go to the country of his friends, and take a wife to his son from among them. The manner of swearing in those times seems to have been a little curious, for which one brought up in this place of the world could find no good reason. Abraham made his servant put his hand under his thigh, and made him swear to the premises. There have been many curious conjectures concerning this manner of swearing, practised by Abraham and his servant. Some have observed that Eliezer put his hand under the place where the sign of circumcision was, as a testimony

mony that he believed the promise, and waited for the accomplishment thereof, and would do nothing in his proceedings, in the marriage of Isaac, that was inconsistent with his belief of the promise, or the character of his master and himself; that by this oath he declared his faith in the Messiah, that was to proceed from Abraham, and in whom, all the families of the earth were to be blessed. It is not improbable that something like this practice was observed, though one would think that it was not a very modest way of administering an oath.

Whatever religion Abraham's servant was of, he seems to have had a very strange method of praying, for after he had set out with ten camels of his master, loaden with such things as were necessary for the expedition, and came to the city of Nahor, in Mesopotamia, he prays to Jehovah, the God of his master, as if he had had no interest in him, himself. *O Lord, God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.* This has nothing in it like the stile of one that believed that Jehovah was his God. But it may be necessary to enquire whether we cannot clear this servant of infidelity, at least of the appearance of unbelief. The Hebrew text reads *literally, Vai-omer Jehovah-Elohe adoni Abraham Ha-kere-na le-pane, Hojom va-ashe chesed im adoni Abraham.* These words may read, *O Jehovah Elohe, may it fall well out for my master Abraham, and do thou shew kindness to my master Abraham.* This was a very proper prayer, and consistent with the character of a man that had sworn an oath, by the Lord God that made the heaven and the earth. Our translation  
very

makes *Eliezer* a perfect heathen, praying in the very stile of *Nebuchadnezzar*, who called *Jehovah the God of Daniel*. There is one thing that appears a little difficult in this story, and that is, Abraham commanding his servant to go to his own country, when it is well known that *Ur, of the Chaldees*, was his country, and not Mesopotamia; but this is easily resolved, by observing, that it was here he first settled, when he left *Ur, of the Chaldees*, and where he stayed till he received a second call from God, to travel to the land of Canaan. It was here his brother *Nahor* settled, and became the father of a large tribe of Syrians, which afterwards were a great people.

The manner of travelling in those times, and in those countries, seem to have been performed with a good degree of parade.—*Ten camels*, and, no doubt, *several servants*, were a considerable retinue, and spoke forth the opulence of the master that sent them. The simplicity of those times, notwithstanding the shew that was made on some occasions is remarkable. A young woman of such a rank as to be fit to be a wife to Abraham's son, to be drawing water, and humbling herself so far as to draw for ten camels also, argued very great condescension and humility. Women of rank, in those times, were not ashamed to perform all the service of household œconomy, which were either within or without doors.

They were not like our modern fine women, who account it a shame to put their hands to any thing, unless it be a piece of *muslin*, *cambric*, or *lawn*. In those primitive patriarchal periods, feed-  
of



ing of flocks, and drawing of water were exercises of young women of the first rank. The daughters of *Jethero*, and *Laban* thought it no disgrace to feed and water their father's flocks. *Rachel* and *Zipporah*, were both shepherdesses, and we do not find that it either spoiled their beauty, or hurt their reputation. These ancient women of rank, did not remain ignorant of the œconomy of the house, when they were employed in the field; they were qualified in all the necessary arts of housewifery, and knew better how to conduct a family, and bring up children than any of the moderns can pretend to. If ancient history does not deceive us, those shepherdesses of antiquity were more cunning in the art of embroidery, and the works of the loom, and the needle, than any that are to be met with, in these days of idleness and dissipation.—— That of confining the fair sex continually to the house, and keeping them engaged, only in the works of the parlour, or the kitchen, may answer the manners of a dissipated age, but will never give that sprightliness and vigour to women, that fresh air, and rural exercise will give them. That part of education that relates to the management of a family ought to be carefully attended; but this, with regard to women, does not altogether consist in mere confinement to the house.—The knowledge of rural enjoyments is also necessary.—There are many employments that anciently belonged to the women, that are now monopolized by the men, such as the fulling of cloath, baking of bread, and dressing of meat. Even in these northern parts, in former times, the mistress of the house, with all

her daughters were employed as well as their *maid servants*, in managing the milk and wool of the flocks, and in working in the dairy. Solomon has beautifully described the exercise of the ancient virtuous women. “ The heart of her husband doth  
 “ safely trust her, so that she shall have no need  
 “ of spoil. She will do him good, and not evil,  
 “ all the days of his life. She seeketh wool and  
 “ flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.  
 “ She is like the merchant ships; she bringeth her  
 “ food from a-far. She riseth also while it is yet  
 “ night, and giveth meat to her household, and a  
 “ portion to her maidens. She considereth a field,  
 “ and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she  
 “ planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with  
 “ strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She per-  
 “ ceiveth that her merchandize is good; her candle  
 “ goeth not out by night. She layeth her hand  
 “ to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.  
 “ She stretcheth out her hand to the poor, yea,  
 “ she reacheth forth her hand to the needy. She  
 “ is not afraid of snow for her household; for all  
 “ her household are cloathed with scarlet. She ma-  
 “ keth her covering of tapestry; her cloathing are  
 “ silk and purple. Her husband is known in the  
 “ gates, where he sitteth among the elders of the city  
 “ She maketh fine linnen, and selleth it, and de-  
 “ livereth girdles to the merchants \*.

That Abraham's servant prayed with knowledge, and understanding of the object he addressed, is manifest both from his request, and the answer of his prayer. Eliezer considered Jehovah-Elohim as the director of future events; for he requests him  
 so

so to order matters, that while he, and the servants, and the camels, stood by the well of water, that when the daughters of the men of the city came out to draw water, the damsel, whom heaven intended for a wife to his master's son, should come among the first, and answer such queries as he should think fit to put to her. Moses has told the story circumstantially, according to the manner of the Hebrews, and with such a profusion of language, that one would think bordered upon tautology.— But we ought to consider that these are the words of Abraham's servant, which Moses has faithfully recorded, that the simplicity of the ancient manners, and the faithfulness of the servant of Abraham might be handed down to posterity. The prayer and speech of Eliezer is exactly in character, and not much unlike the manner that some tolerably sensible stewards would deliver a message, or repeat a prayer in English. When the servant opens his commission, and tells his errand, he enters minutely into all the circumstances that related to his coming to Mesopotamia. He tells whose servant he was, and gives a particular account of his master's family and circumstances. He informs the friends of Rebekah concerning the riches and wealth of his master ; that he had a son in his old age, which Sarah bare to him when she was old, and that Abraham had given all that he had to this only son. The manner in which the patriarch's servant tells his story is very simple and natural, and answers exceedingly to the character of the speaker. “ I am  
“ Abraham's servant, and the Lord hath blessed  
“ my master greatly, and he is become great ; and



“ he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver,  
“ and gold, and men-servants, and maid-servants,  
“ and camels, and asses. And Sarah, my master’s  
“ wife, bare a son to my master when he was old,  
“ and unto him hath he given all that he hath.  
“ And my master made me swear, saying, thou  
“ shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters  
“ of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; but,  
“ thou shalt go unto my father’s house, and to my  
“ kindred, and take a wife to my son. And I said  
“ unto my master, peradventure the woman will  
“ not follow me. And he said unto me, the *Lord*,  
“ before whom I walk, will send his angel with  
“ thee and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take  
“ a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my  
“ father’s house; then shalt thou be clear from my  
“ oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if  
“ they give not thee *one* thou shalt be clear from  
“ my oath. And I came this day unto the well,  
“ and said, O Lord God! if now thou will prof-  
“ per my way, which I go for my master Abra-  
“ ham, behold, I stand by the well of water, and  
“ it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh  
“ forth to draw *water*, and I say unto her, give  
“ me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to  
“ drink; and she say, both drink thou, and I will  
“ also draw for thy camels; let the same *be* the  
“ woman whom Jehovah hath appointed out for  
“ my master’s son. And before I had done speak-  
“ ing in mine heart, behold Rebekah came forth  
“ with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went  
“ down unto the well, and drew water; and I said  
“ unto her, let me drink, I pray thee. And she  
“ made

“ made haste, and let down her pitcher from her  
 “ shoulder, and said drink, and I will give thy ca-  
 “ mels drink also; so I drank, and she made the  
 “ camels drink also. And I asked her, and said,  
 “ whose daughter art thou? And she said, the  
 “ daughter of *Bethuel, Nahor's son*, whom *Milcah*  
 “ bare unto him: and I put the ear-rings upon her  
 “ face, and the bracelets upon her hands; and  
 “ bowed down my head and worshipped *Jehovah*,  
 “ and blessed *Jehovah-Elohim* for my master *Abra-*  
 “ *ham*, who had led me in the right way, to take  
 “ my master's brother's daughter unto his son.  
 “ And now, if thou wilt deal kindly with my ma-  
 “ ster, tell me; and if not, tell me; that I may  
 “ turn to the right hand, or to the left.”

This servant appears to have been both a faithful and an artful messenger. He begins with informing the friends of *Rebekah* of the wealth and riches of his master, and that he had given it all to his son; that *Abraham* had a great opinion of the family of *Bethuel*, and would have no connection with the *Canaanites*: that the Lord had shewed a special countenance to the whole of this undertaking, by directing him so providentially to the well where *Rebekah* was to come; and, in a special manner had heard his prayer, and answered his request, according to his desire. This whole harangue, being prefaced with a present of jewels and bracelets, was most likely to have a powerful operation both upon the friends and the damsel. It is remarkable, that *Abraham's* servant would neither eat nor drink till he had told his errand. There might be two reasons for this. The first, left

lest he should, through festivity, be put off his guard, and forget some particulars of his commission, or some articles of his story.—And secondly, that he might, while all the family were in a sort of surprize and agitation, work upon their affections, by the plausibleness of his story, and gain their consent, before they had time to recover themselves from the effects of his marvellous and artful harangue. He shewed them, in his speech, that his master was rich,—that he was a favourite of heaven,—that the Lord had, in a miraculous manner, answered his prayer in behalf of his master ;—and so joins the things of heaven and earth together, to form an argument to gain his purpose. But one thing is observable in the whole of this circumstantial harangue, that Eliezer attributes the whole of his master's good fortune, and his own success, to the Almighty. He says the Lord had given Abraham a son, flocks, and herds, camels, and asses,—man-servants, and maid servants, gold, and silver ; and that every step of his way, as his master's messenger, had been conducted by a special and particular providence. There are not many persons in these modern days, that care for troubling Providence when they go to seek wives,—nor is religion taken into consideration, provided there be plenty of silver and gold, flocks, and herds, and other temporal enjoyments. The daughters of the Canaanites, provided they are rich, are now looked upon as being as fit for professors of religion, as any sincere worshippers of the true God. If any person were to come with such a formal story, concerning the *presence* and *providence of God*, when he was  
going



going to seek a wife, he would soon become an object of ridicule, and be posted up for an idiot in all time coming.

Abraham's servant appears to have known how to pursue his success; he knew delays were dangerous, and pushes on his suit with all the energy he was master of. Rebeckah's brother, and mother, proposes a delay of ten days, but the servant insisted that, as the Lord had prospered him in his journey, that they ought not to hinder him, but send him away. He puts them in mind, that every moment's delay, on their side, was a willful counter-acting of Providence, seeing the Lord had so far given countenance to the design. This they could not deny, and so left the whole to Rebekah, who very readily complied.

Men and women must have been more directed by judgement, in those days, than by fancy, otherwise it is not easy to conceive how Rebekah should have given her consent to marry a man she never saw,—or that Isaac should have suffered a servant to have performed, what especially was his own business to have looked after. We have no authority to suppose that *either of the parties* ever saw one another's *pictures*. The whole was a translation of *judgement* and *reason*, and not of *love*; for it was impossible that persons can love objects they never saw, in the sense that love is commonly understood. We must attribute the whole of this transaction to *Providence*, from first to last. Whatever might be the particular errors of the people of those times, there is one thing that is very particular in their character; and that is, they were very careful to consult

consult the Almighty in all matters of importance; and were well acquainted with the signatures of the divine presence and will. Some of our present professors of religion would have considered Eliezer's ejaculations to have been *enthusiasm*, and Rebekah's coming to the well only *a matter of chance*.—Or, probably, they would imagine, that the whole was a contrivance of the servant to gain the purpose, for which he came. Religious, and *really sober people*, will believe *otherwise*, and see the finger of God in the whole transaction.

It was not the custom, in those ancient times, for men to expect fortunes with their wives; the bridegroom, in those days, gave a dowry to the friends of the bride; this was long a custom among the Jews. Abraham's servant was well provided for this circumstance; his master had furnished him with *jewels of silver*, and *jewels of gold*, and other precious things, sufficient for a dowry to Rebekah's friends. When the daughter of Bethuel came away with Abraham's servant, the parting was solemn and religious. Her father appears, by this time, to have been dead, for there is no mention of his having any share in the whole transaction; when she came away, her brothers or sisters gave her their blessing. This blessing was a real prophecy, and perhaps was founded upon the promise made to Abraham, which had been made known to his friends in Syria. *And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those that hate them.* The promise to Abraham is much in the same words:—*Thy seed shall possess the gates*

*gates of thine enemies* \*. It is not improbable that Rebekah's family were acquainted with that revelation which was made to their friend Abraham, and had learned from hence to rule their wishes, and direct their prayers, according to the gracious promise of God. There appears to have been more religion among those Syrians than there is to be found among many Christians in our times; for, it is not now an ordinary practice, among professors of religion, to be so serious on such an occasion. Among the ancients both festivity and religion were observed at marriages, but now both are almost laid aside; mankind are always running into extremes, and it is seldom that the golden mean is observed.

There were several peculiarities in the marriages of the ancient patriarchs: 1. That of giving gifts, or presents, to the bride and her friends, which was a sign of the contract between the parties. 2. There was a matrimonial bill and writing given by the husband to the wife: but, I rather think, this was not practised till the times of Moses. 3. The marriage was consummated by the man and the woman under a tent, or canopy; to this the Psalmist refers, when he says of the heavens, *in them he hath set a tabernacle for the sun, which, as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race* †; so we find Isaac receiving Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent. 4. They observed the practice of praising God, and giving a benediction to the new-married persons, which Rebekah's

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friends

\* Gen. xxii. 17.

† Psal. xix. 4, 5.



friends seem to have used at her departure, because they could not be present at the nuptial ceremony. After the commencement of the Jewish commonwealth, the ceremonies of marriages were very particularly observed, as is plain from the marriage of Sampson. The marriage feast generally lasted seven days. The critics have considered the words of Laban to refer to the marriage-feast, when he says to Jacob, in the case of his marriage with Leah, *fulfil her week*, i. e. *fulfil the usual days of her marriage-feast*. But it is not so certain that these formalities were so particularly observed at that time. 5. When the wife was presented to the husband, she covered her head with a vail as a token of subjection; so Rebekah covered her head with a vail when she met Isaac, and was led by him into Sarah's tent. There were many formalities introduced into the Jewish marriages afterwards, that were not in use in the patriarchal period, tho' the substance of the whole appears to have been practised very early. As it was usual to give the bride a marriage-writing, I have given a copy of one in the notes \*, which will shew the formality of

\* Upon such a day of such a month, in such a year, and upon the banks of such a river, (for they commonly married in the open air, and by the side of some river) N. son of N. said to N. daughter of N. be thou my wife according to the rites of Moses and the Israelites. And with the help of God I will honour thee, maintain thee, cloath thee, and feed thee, according to the custom of other husbands of our nation, who honour, maintain, cloath, and feed their wives, as they ought to do. I give thee

of that particular, as far as the ancient practice and the modern use agree among the Jews. On some occasion, after marriage, there was a copy of a divorce given to the wife. This the Hebrews called  
[*Kerituth*]

thee for a portion, and for the price of thy virginity, two hundred *zuzims* of silver, (*these two hundred zuzims make about fifty Shekels of silver*) which are due to thee according to the law. Besides which, I engage myself to provide thee with cloaths, and convenient food, as also to discharge that conjugal duty which is due to thee, according to the custom of all nations.

And the said N. has consented to become his spouse. Moreover, the said bridegroom has promised by way of augmentation of dowry, that, besides the principal sum, he will give —. And what the said bride has brought with her is estimated at the value of —, which the said bridegroom acknowledges to have received and to charge himself with, and has made us the declaration following.— I accept and receive under my care and keeping all that is above-mentioned, as well for dowry, as upon any other account; and oblige myself and my heirs, under the security of all my goods, whether moveable or not, present or to come, even to the clock that I wear upon my shoulders, to give a true and faithful account to my said spouse, of all that she has brought me as a dowry, or upon any other account, during my life, or at my death. All which I promise to put in execution, according to the form and tenour of the usual contracts of marriage, in use among the children of Israel, and according to the rules of our *Rabbins* of pious memory. In testimony of which we have signed these presents, &c.

*Leo of Modena* says, that the custom of the Jews is to make choice of a Wednesday or Friday for the celebration

[*Kerituth*] a bill of cutting off. This was a writing of many particulars, and was attended with much ceremony. It was very much against the wife, and left her at the mercy of a capricious husband, who, provided he pursued the ceremony according

of a marriage, if it is a maid that is to be married, or of a Thursday if it is a widow. The evening before the solemnity, the bride goes to a bath, and plunges herself into the water. She is accompanied with several women, who lead her to the bath by the sound of several kitchen instruments, to give notice to the neighbourhood that she is going to be married. There is some disagreement between *Selden*, *Buxtorf*, and *Leo of Modena*, upon the subject of marriage ceremonies; which shews that the customs vary according to the difference of places and persons. The bride is set out with every thing that can be had that is fine and rich, and then she is led into the open air, either upon the banks of a river, into a court, or a garden. Sometimes this is performed in a hall, dressed and adorned on purpose. The bridegroom and bride are placed under a canopy, each of them covered with a black veil. On their heads is put another square veil, having four tufts hanging at the four corners. This veil is what the Hebrews call *Taled*.

Then the *Rabbin* of the place, or the chanter of the synagogue, or the nearest relation of the husband, takes a cup full of wine, and having pronounced this benediction, "Blessed be thou, O Lord, who hast created man and woman, and ordained marriage, &c." he presents the cup to the bridegroom, and then to the bride, that they may just taste it. Afterwards the bridegroom puts a ring upon the finger of his bride, in presence of two witnesses, saying, "by this ring thou art my spouse, according to the custom of Moses and the children of Israel." *Buxtorf* says



gording to form, might, upon the most trifling occasion, put her away. It was a very unnatural kind of a law, and was not from the beginning, so our Saviour set it aside, and commanded that no man should put away his wife, unless for the crime of

says, that this ring ought to be of massy gold, and not set with any stones; and that the bridegroom takes the company to witness, that it is good gold, and of a due value. After this they read the contract of marriage, which the bridegroom puts into the hands of the bride's relations. Then they bring wine again in some brittle vessel, they rehearse six blessings, they make the married couple drink, and they throw the rest on the ground in token of cheerfulness. The bridegroom takes the vessel, and throws it with violence against the ground, or against the wall, and breaks it in pieces in memory, as they say, of the destruction of the temple.

The *Rabbins* inform us, that before the temple of Jerusalem was laid in ruins, the bride and bridegroom wore crowns in the ceremony of marriage; but since that time they have ceased to wear any. In the Scripture we see plainly the crown of the bridegroom, but not that of the bride: And indeed, the head-dress of the women was by no means convenient for the wearing of a crown. *Isai. lxi. 10. Vulg. Quasi sponsam decoratum corona.* And *Cant. iii. 11. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.* The modern Jews in some places have a custom to throw handfuls of wheat upon the married couple, and particularly upon the bride, saying, *increase and multiply.* In other places they mingle pieces of money with the wheat, which are to be gathered up by the poor.

CALMET's Dict. of the Holy Bible.

of fornication. The Jewish divorce consisted of ten articles †, many of them frivolous and absurd.

In this history of the marriage of Isaac we are informed of ear-rings, and bracelets, that were given to Rebekah, and put upon her face by Abraham's servant, which appears something strange to such

† After the marriage was finished, sometimes there was permitted a bill of divorce, this the Hebrews called *Sepher Kerithuth*, a bill of cutting off, because the woman is, by this means, cut off from her husband's family. Ten things were thought requisite, as the root and foundation of a divorce. 1. "That a man put her not away, but of his own will. 2. That he put her away by writing, not by any other thing. 3. That the matter of the writing be to divorce her, and put her away, out of her possession. 4. That the matter of that divorcement be between him and her. 5. That it be written by her name. 6. That there be no action wanting, after the writing thereof, save the delivery of it unto her. 7. That he give it unto her. 8. That he give it her before witnesses. 9. That he give it her by the law of divorces. 10. That it be the husband, or his deputy, that delivereth it unto her." The form or copy of this bill of divorcement was as followeth, "Upon such a day of the week, such and such of the month N. such or such an year of the creation of the world, according to the computation which we use here, in this city N. situated near the river N. that I of the country N. the son of Rabbi N. of the country N. But now I dwelling in such or such a place, near such or such a river, have desired of my own free will, without any co-action, and have divorced, dismissed, and cast out thee, thee, I say, thee, my wife N. of the country N. the daughter of Rabbi

such as are unacquainted with the customs of those countries. The prophet Isaiah mentions *noſe-jewels*, chap. iii. 22. The ſame word is uſed there as

“ Rabbi N. dwelling in ſuch or ſuch a country, and  
 “ dwelling now in ſuch or ſuch a place, ſituate near ſuch  
 “ or ſuch a river, which haſt been my wife heretofore,  
 “ but now I do divorce thee, diſmiſs thee, and caſt thee  
 “ out, that thou mayeſt be free, and have the rule of thy-  
 “ ſelf, and to depart, and to marry with any other man  
 “ whom thou wilt, and let no man be reſuſed by thee for  
 “ me, from this day forward for ever. Thus be thou law-  
 “ ful for any man, and this ſhall be to thee from me, a  
 “ bill of ſeparation, a bill of divorce, and a letter of diſ-  
 “ miſſion, according to the law of Moſes, and Iſrael.

N. *the ſon of N. witneſs.*

N. *the ſon of N. witneſs.*

This bill was written by a ſcrivener, or public notary,  
 And further more, a woman being divorced, or otherwiſe  
 a widow, it was not lawful for her to marry again, till ſhe  
 had “ tarried ninety days, beſides the day of her divorce,  
 “ or of her husband’s death, and her laſt ſpouſals: to the  
 “ end it might be known, whether ſhe were with child  
 “ or no: and that there might be proof, whether it were  
 “ the ſeed of her firſt husband, or of her ſecond.”

It was a common cuſtom among the Romans, about the  
 time of our *Saviour’s* birth, even for the women to divorce  
 their husbands, and to marry again at their pleaſure. Of  
 this, Heathen authors ſpeak :

———*Sic ſunt octo mariti,*

*Quinque per autumnos.*

Juvenal. Satyr 6. verſe 230.

*Et nubet decimo jam Theleſina viro.*

Martial lib. 8.



as in this place, and signifies a sort of pearl or precious stone fixed to the head-dress, and hung down over the forehead, by a thread, to the nose. These were used also in the ears, in the same manner as women use ear-rings among us, and so were called either *nose-jewels*, or *ear-rings*, according to the place they were fixed to. Among the eastern people

*Non consulum, sed meritorum numero annos suos computant, &c.* The bill tendered by the woman, was termed *Γραμμάτια ἀπλειψίως* letters of forsaking not letters of cutting off, or putting away. This same practise was in use also among the Hebrews. Hence is that saying of our Saviour: *If a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she commiteth adultery.* Mark x. 12.—Now, although at that time, human laws forbad not marriages renewed with others upon such divorce, yet God's law condemned both such divorces, and such marriages; and, before God, persons marrying after such divorcements were reputed digamites, that is, to have two husbands, or two wives. For this reason, a minister, above others, is commanded to be *μίας γυναίκος ἀνὴρ*, the husband of one wife 1 Tim. iii. 2. And the woman she is commanded to be *εὐδὸς ἀνδρὸς ἑνὸς*, the wife of one husband, 1 Tim. v. 9. In which text second marriages, (in case of the husband's or wife's death) are no more forbidden, than the poet forbad them in the like phrase.

*Unico gaudens mulier marito.*

*Horat. Carmin. 3. 14.*

Note in the last place, that among the Jews the bride-woman also brought a dowry to her husband; it was sometimes more, sometimes less; it was called by the Rabbins *nedunia*: “Reguel gave with his daughter *Sarah* half his goods, servants, cattle, and money. *Tob. xx. 10.*

ple this sort of dress is very common, but would appear very absurd among us, because our manners are different. We would consider it as a sort of wonder, to see a woman, who was employed in drawing water, and watering camels dressed in such gaudy attire, and so richly ornamented.

It was on account of the correspondence that the shepherds had with the merchants that furnished them with so many luxuries. In those times, men of such a character as Abraham, were in more esteem than any prince of Europe at this day; and could make a display of more fine things than the first monarch in these western parts. Yet, we do not find that Abraham was fond of dominion, or desired power over others.

Before the death of Abraham, the whole affairs of his family were settled with great judgment, and propriety; he did not leave Isaac, the *heir of the promise*, incumbered with the charge of his children by his other wives, but settled appointments for them all, and sent them away towards the east country, which then was the particular property of no people, but free to the first possessor. These, with the Ishmaelites, formed several tribes of Arabians; which, to this day, are a sort of freebooters, that wait for their prey, and plunder the caravans that fall in their way, in their journies to and from Egypt.

Abraham, after living to a good old age, at last died, in the hundred threescore and fifteenth year of his age, and was buried by his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, in the cave of Machpelah, where Sarah his wife had been buried before. It would appear, that Isaac and Ishmael were not far distant

at this time, and that tidings had been sent to Ishmael, concerning the death of his father, and that he came to perform this last office to his deceased parent. Moses has not mentioned any thing concerning the last words of Abraham, as he has done concerning Jacob, though, it is probable, this Father of the Faithful would give a charge to his family, which was then a common thing to all good men, who were not immediately snatched away by a violent death. What, or whether he made any speech at his departure, as Moses has not informed us, must be left entirely as a conjecture.

Abraham had been long a very remarkable character in those parts of the world ; his name will never be forgotten as long as the world stands. Believers admire his faith ; all his friends in those parts venerate his name. Jews, and Gentiles, Turks, and Arabians, revere the name of Abraham. The Chaldeans, Assyrians, Egyptians, and Hebrews, all were the better of the service he did them ; and to this day, among Christians, his faith is accounted a pattern.

I shall conclude this discourse by observing, that, among all the patriarchs, there is not one to be found who shewed a greater regard to the commandment of God than Abraham, nor any that more implicitly believed his word when once it was revealed to him. He forsook his country at the divine commandment, and became a pilgrim in a strange land ; he offered up the son of the promise when he was called to it, without hesitation, and never doubted of the promise, *that in Isaac shall his seed be called*. He was mighty in war, wise in  
time



time of peace, rich in cattle, flocks, and herds; but above all rich in faith, and an heir of the promise. His views were not confined to the things of this world, for he looked for a better country, that is an heavenly; and was not ashamed to call God his father, because he had provided for him a city. There are some blemishes in his character, but his virtues are so many, and his whole life so excellent, that his faults are forgotten, and pity wipes away the small stains in his character with the tears of compassion.

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## LECTURE XIV.

*The Character of ISAAC.—His Adventures.  
—His Faith.—The Birth of his two  
Sons.—The Simplicity of the Manner of  
Living among the Ancients.*

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GENESIS XXV. 19, 20, 21.

*And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac.*

*And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.*

*And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.*

**M**OSESES is shorter in the account of the life of Isaac than of his father Abraham, or his son Jacob; but, though the history of Isaac's life is not so long as some of the other patriarchs, it appears to be more free of errors, and his character is more finished than any of them. It is not so crowded with adventures, nor are there such a variety of circumstances in the history of Isaac as of Abraham; the incidents do not lye so close together, nor are they so surprizing in the character of the son as of the father. They are, however, important in their nature, and worthy of our consideration.

There

There was one thing afflicted Isaac grievously, for a long time after his marriage with Rebekah, the sister of Laban, the Syrian, and that was the want of children:—Rebekah was barren, and was not like to have any children, which greatly affected Isaac, who was waiting for the progress of the promise in his seed, according as the Lord had spoken to Abraham. Such delays of the promise appear to have been intended for a trial of the faith of the patriarchs, that it might be seen that they trusted God, as well when things went against them, as when all was going on according to their desire. When persons are not tried by afflictions and disappointments, their virtue will not appear so conspicuous, as when it shines forth in the midst of the greatest hardships and difficulties. The Almighty tried Isaac in the same manner as he did his father Abraham:—gave him the promise of a seed, and yet delayed the accomplishment, till the laws of nature proclaimed the thing almost impossible. Isaac was sixty years of age before Rebekah had any children,—this made twenty years between their marriage and their having a seed, according to the promise. All this while Isaac did not despair of the promise, but prayed to Jehovah for the accomplishment thereof: he knew that the means and the end were connected by divine appointment, and that prayer was an homage due to God, even for things that should certainly come to pass. Isaac's piety and his faith kept pace with one another;—his belief of the promise made him more fervent and frequent in addressing the throne of mercy. Delays only increased his desires for the enjoyment of the good thing promised,



promised, and he expressed them by earnest supplication to the Almighty. It is something surprising, that those who have the strongest hopes of the accomplishment of the divine word, are the persons who pray most for the fulfilment thereof, and cry to God for the thing promised, though they are fully assured that it will be certainly performed in due time, and not till then. One would imagine that it looked more like an insult than devotion, for persons, who profess their belief in the promises of God, to be always earnestly requesting him to fulfil his word, when they know that there will not be a moment's delay longer than the appointed time thereof. This would certainly be the case, provided that the Lord had not commanded his people to pay this homage to him, and said, that for these things he will be enquired after, to do them, for his children. Believers ask the thing promised, because they have no authority to ask for any thing else, and as they do not know the time when it may be fulfilled, or whether the Almighty has limited himself to an exact period, they seek what he has promised, with an earnest inclination to have it as soon as possible. The most fervent requests of believers are always regulated according to the will of God; and, when they cry to him most fervently, they yet rest entirely submissive to his will. When Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife Rebekah, it is not to be supposed that he intended to limit God with regard to the time of fulfilling his promise; but, as he did not know whether the Almighty had entirely settled a precise time, he supplicated his mercy to have the promise fulfilled in part

as soon as he pleased. Whatever be the cause of this practice, it is an undoubted fact, that all those who believe God's word, and have their hope placed in his faithfulness, are the most frequent and fervent in their supplications for the accomplishment of the promise. All ages of the world, and the practice of all the saints, confirm this observation; for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the ancient worthies, who rested their hope upon the promises of God, were the most fervent observers of prayer to the Most High. And it always argues the want of confidence in the divine word, when men neglect this divine ordinance.

In the history of Isaac, we never find that he married any more wives than Rebekah, which can scarcely be said of any other of the ancient patriarchs, who had more wives than one, and some of them a great number. Isaac loved Rebekah, and confined his affection to her alone: his temperance on this head is worthy of imitation, and his practice nearer that of innocence than that of his father, and his own children. His temperance and sobriety contributed to lengthen his days to a greater extent than any of his cotemporaries; he lived longer than his father, and a great number of years above the age of his son Jacob. It seldom happens that persons that are greatly addicted to much commerce with the sex, live to any great age; at least not so long as they otherwise would do, according to the course of nature, provided they had lived chastly, and practised temperance as they ought to have done. It appears something strange, that Isaac should

should have had a like adventure with his father Abraham in the very same country, and should have fallen into the same error that he fell into in denying his wife. It is plain, that the people in those countries were not very virtuous, when they were so fond of other men's wives, or ready to seize upon every woman they took a fancy for. Isaac was forced, for the same reason that obliged his father, to go to the land of the Philistines. There was then a famine in the land of Canaan, and Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines, and dwelt in Gerar. This seems to have happened after the birth of his two sons, if we consider the story according to the order in which it is placed in the Mosaic account. But I am inclined to think, that this adventure must have fallen out before that time; for there is no mention made of his children all the time that he was in the land of the Philistines. There is an account of his flocks and herds, of his servants, of his sowing in the land and receiving an hundred-fold, of his digging wells, and of his servants striving with the Philistines concerning them, but not one word of his sons all this time. It would appear that the whole of the 26th chapter, as far as the 34th verse, should come in at the 11th verse of the 25th chapter, and that the last verse of the 25th chapter should immediately proceed that paragraph which begins at verse 34th, chapter 26th. That those who love the study of the Scriptures may judge concerning this observation, I shall place the history as it ought to have been, and certainly was placed by Moses, though transposed



transposed by some transcribers of Hebrew copies \*.

Before Isaac went down to Gerar it is said that the Lord appeared unto him, and renewed the promise which had been made before to Abraham. It is

*Chap. xxv. ver. 11.*—And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac: and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi.

*Chap. xxvi.*—1 And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines, unto Gerar.

2 And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, go not down into Egypt: dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of.

3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee: for unto thee and unto thy seed I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father.

4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries: and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

6 And Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

7 And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, she is my sister: for he feared to say, she is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah, because she was fair to look upon.

8 And it came to pass when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and behold Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife.

is highly probable that this appearance was that of a *man*, which had been frequently made to Abraham, during his pilgrimage. This was none other than the *Messiah*, so often called the *Angel Jehovah* in the writings of Moses, who, in the character of a man, made the divine attributes visible to the patriarchs,

9 And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidest thou, she is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, because I said, lest I die for her.

10 And Abimelech said, what is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us.

11 And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife, shall surely be put to death.

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundred fold, and the LORD blessed him.

13 And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew untill he became very great.

14 For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants. And the Philistines envied him.

15 For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of his father Abraham, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.

16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us: for thou art much mightier than we.

17 And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the  
Philistines

triarchs. This appearance was often the preface to the renewing of the promise, concerning the blessing of the nations by the coming of Christ, and so it is in verse 2d, chap. xxvi. *Jehovah, who appeared*, renewed the promise to Isaac, and gave him directions how to behave, when he sojourned in

Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

19 And Isaac's servants digged in the vally, and found there a well o. springing water.

20 And the herdmen of Gerar, did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, the water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek, because they strove with him.

21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well, and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, for now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beerisheba.

24 And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

26 Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phicol the chief captain of his army.

27 And Isaac said unto them, wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?



in that strange land where he was going to. There is no reason to question but *these appearances of Jehovah* had such *striking signatures of divinity in them*, that it was not possible for the patriarchs to mistake this phenomenon, for any secondary messenger of heaven, such as angels. *The person who appeared*

28 And they said, we saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee;

29 That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace; thou art now the blessed of the LORD.

30 And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.

31 And they rose up betimes in the morning and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

32 And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, we have found water.

33 And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

*Chap. xxv. 12*—Now these are the generations of Ishmael Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's hand-maid, bare unto Abraham.

13 And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The first-born of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,

14 And Mishma, and Dumah, and Messah,

15 Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

16 These

*appeared* was the promiser, who displayed *divine perfections*, by telling what was to come many ages after; and this he did *in his own name*, and *by his own authority*. The human nature of *Jesus Christ*, seems to be that *center* where the divine perfections meet, so as to be made *tolerable*, and *visible*, to organized

16 These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations.

17 And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered unto his people.

18 And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest towards Assyria: and he dyed in the presence of all his brethren.

19 And these are the generations of Isaac Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac.

20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aran, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

21 And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

22 And the children struggled together within her: and she said, if it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.

23 And the LORD said unto her, two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

25 And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment: and they called his name Esau.

26 And

organized beings like us; and it does not appear evident that it is possible to endure the displays of divine glory, except what are made through this medium. The *tabernacle* and *temple* where the *glory of God was displayed*, were only *figures* of the *body of Christ*, and served as *indirect mediums* to *vail that glory* till the *substance* came; but the apostle tells us that these were *only shadows*, but the *body*, or *substance*, was CHRIST. The infinite splendour of the Deity could not be endured

26 And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was three-score years old when she bare them.

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field: and Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents.

28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 And Jacob sod pottage; and Esau came from the field, and he was faint.

30 And Esau said to Jacob, feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint; therefore was his name called Edom.

31 And Jacob said, sell me this day thy birth-right.

32 And Esau said, behold I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birth-right do to me?

33 And Jacob said, swear unto me this day; and he swore unto him; and he sold his birth-right unto Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles: and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way; thus Esau despised his birth-right.

*Chap. xxvi.* 34. And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemah the daughter of Elon the Hittite.



red by creatures of any rank or degree in the whole universe; though angels are spirits, there is no reason to believe that they could bear a display of the whole splendour of Deity.—They are therefore obliged to look to Jehovah through the same glass that his people among the sons of men make use of. *Spiritual intelligences*, as they are but finite creatures, are no more able to bear the direct views of divine glory, without some medium, more than material eyes are able to endure the *direct rays of the sun* when he shines in his splendour. For this reason, in all ages *past, present, and to come*, *Jehovah, our Saviour, has been, and will be*, the medium of divine communication to creatures. As for abstract views of God, we are not certain if angels are capable of perceiving, or enduring them. Those kind of arguments that philosophers make use of, in describing the *divine character*, are *mere creatures of fancy*; they rank up a number of *qualities*, which they call *attributes of the Deity*, and consider them as things *adorable and glorious*; but, when they have finished all their climax, it is no more than a creature of their own that they adore; nothing except a negative character, for what the Essence is they cannot tell. They only argue away as many imperfections as they can, and what remains *they call God*; but those who behold him in the face of Jesus never pretend to describe his character, any farther than his only begotten has declared him. What we call *power, justice, holiness, goodness, and truth*, may, and ought to be ascribed to *Jehovah, as their author*,—but whether they belong to his nature we cannot tell; for we  
know

know nothing of a divine essence, except what Christ has shewn us. When philosophic men come to see God as he is, they will be obliged to confess, that they never had any just ideas of him, upon the principles of any philosophy that ever existed since the world began. No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father,—it is he alone that hath declared him. *Isaac saw Jehovah through the Messiah*, and there never was, nor ever will be, another way of beholding him with satisfaction.

The promise that was on this occasion made to Isaac was the same, and in the same words that had been made to Abraham before, and at this time was renewed, because Isaac was to meet with some new trials in a strange place. This has been the method which God has used from the beginning, in comforting his people,—always to shew his *holy promises* to them, and to display his faithfulness in the times of their affliction. This has been the universal catholicon of health to the souls of all believers in trouble.

After many prayers, for the space of twenty years, Rebekah conceived by her husband, Isaac; and was at last delivered of twins. The circumstances of this affair are something strange, and uncommon; before the time of Rebekah's delivery twins struggled in her womb, which alarmed her greatly. She therefore went to consult the Lord concerning this extraordinary phenomenon, and received for answer, *that two nations were in her womb, and two manner of people should be separated from her bowels; and that the one people should be stronger*

*stronger than the other, and that the elder should serve the younger.*—In what manner Rebekah enquired of the Lord, concerning this affair, is not particularly said in the text ; but it is very probable that it was by prayer and supplication that she made this enquiry, and that the Lord answered her in a dream, or a vision, which, in those times were the common ways of revelation to individuals. Whatever was the method of enquiry, the revelation was true, and afterwards accomplished in the posterity of the two sons that were born to Isaac. The names of these two sons, like many others of the Hebrews, were given them with regard to certain actions they did, or qualities that belonged to them. Esau is so called from his being almost a perfect man at his birth, and being not like other children, who have no hair, except upon their heads,—whereas Esau was hairy all over ;—and Jacob is so called, because *he took his brother by the heel at his birth*, and also because *he supplanted him of the blessing*.

The distinction between the two sons, foretold by God, soon began to be visible ; for Esau became a man of the field, and was given to hunting, and Jacob minded domestic business, and waited upon the flocks and the cattle of his father. The tempers of men are soon discovered by their choice of employments when they are left to their own will ; those who are given to hunting, are in general less feeling in their disposition, and less humane than those that are fond of domestic exercises, and delight in social life. Such as are exceedingly addicted to the sports of the field, are generally not



much different in their nature from the wild beasts they are so fond of hunting down. We need no more to confirm this observation, than to turn our eyes around us to those *Nimrods* and *Esaus* in our own country, who spend their time in hunting down *innocent hares*, and in pursuing foxes.—I mean those who are never in their right element, except when engaged in such employment. You will always find such persons *overbearing* in their *tempers*, and *boisterous* in their *manners*; they are seldom either very polished in their address, or given to *acts of religion* and *humanity*: They are fonder of conversing with *hounds* than with *Christians*, and take more pleasure in the *sound of the horn* than the *word of truth*. And I may safely appeal to the history of the Bible, whether, among all that are recorded there *as fearers of God*, there be a *single person of this character among them*. It is not affirmed that such boisterous men are not *objects of divine mercy*, or that God may not forgive their iniquities, according to his good pleasure; but only, that while they are in *this world*, they are in general *very worthless characters*, and not *well fitted for society*. Almost all men who have an extravagant inclination for this wild exercise, are a wild and barbarous sort of people, and not suited in their tempers for social life.

It appears from the history, that Isaac had a partiality in favour of his eldest son, as Rebekah had for the youngest.—Moses gives a reason for this; he says, *his father loved him, because he did eat of his venison*. It must be considered that Isaac was now old and valetudinary, and, like others in that situation,

situation, might be something whimsical in his taste for some particular food; and as Esau was careful in pleasing him, it was natural to suppose, that such officiousness would increase his affection. An affectionate parent cannot help regarding a child that runs all risks, and undergoes every fatigue to procure the thing that the father loves. Such a son Esau appears to have been, and in this there was no fault, but, on the contrary, real merit.

Though Esau appears to have been the favourite of his father, yet, according to the Mosaic history, he seems to have been a profane man, who did not love religion, or divine things, in his heart. The birth-right which belonged to him as the eldest son, he despised, and sold, for a morsel of pottage, to his younger brother. The reason that Moses gives for this part of Esau's conduct is, that he was hungry, and faint through hunting. That, in such a family as that of Isaac, there should have been such scarcity of food, as that nothing could be had, except the red pottage which Jacob had made, is not very probable, when we are assured that the first year he came to Gerar he reaped an hundred-fold, and had always plenty of flocks and herds. Esau might have undoubtedly satisfied his hunger with something else than his brother's pottage; but his appetite seems to have longed for them, and he wanted to have it gratified, cost what it would. One would think that it was not brotherly in Jacob to require any thing at all from his hungry elder brother, but that it was taking a severe advantage to make him part with his birth-right for so small a price. It is hardly to be sup-

posed that Jacob would have asked such a price for his red potage, provided he had not before known that Esau despised his birth-right. It is plain, that this birth-right did not consist of any temporal enjoyment which belonged to the family of Isaac; for Jacob received none of his father's temporalities;—these went all to Esau, as is plain from the history of Moses. The birth-right which Esau sold and Jacob purchased, consisted of having the promise of the Messiah transmitted in the line of primogeniture. Esau, as the eldest son and the first born of Isaac, had this right, *that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed*, namely, by having the Messiah coming in his line. This was a subject of little consideration to Esau; it brought nothing, as he thought, of advantage along with it, and was a thing of the least value he could think on to give for gratifying his appetite. The apostle, on this account, calls him a profane person, because he despised that which was of the highest value. He could not have been called profane for selling an estate, or a temporal inheritance; this might have been called folly, but could not have been considered as profane. But it was highly profane to despise the promise of God, and sell the honour of having the Messiah in his family. Esau speaks, as many of the sons of Epicurus have done since, *I am going to die, and what profit shall this birth-right do to me?* This is much the same with these words, *let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*. Had Esau understood the nature of his birth-right, he would have found that the principal use thereof pertained to another life, and therefore it would be of most service



service at death, and do him most good.—But this does not appear to have been any of his concerns; he concluded, that when he was dead, that the promise would be of no more service to him. Jacob considered it in another point of view, and looked upon the honour of having the Messiah in his family as the greatest that could possibly happen to any mortal upon earth. He, therefore, understanding that his brother set no value upon this part of his birth, took this opportunity to purchase it, lest Esau, in some of his foolish fits, should sell it to some other person. On this occasion Jacob only bought what his brother despised, and, in this case, there is no blame can be imputed to him; for Moses observes, *thus Esau despised his birth-right*.

It may appear something strange to those who are unacquainted with the customs of the ancients, to find the sons of such a person as Isaac cooking their own victuals. But this was very common among all the Asiatics, and the Greeks also. The manner of living in those days, and in those countries was exceeding simple.—The Arcadians fed upon acorns, the Argives upon apples, and the Athenians upon figs. We find in Homer, the chief of the Grecian heroes dining in the tent of Achilles upon a *loin of mutton* and an *hock of bacon*, and Patroclus lighting the fire, while the master of the feast was spiting the meat \*.

And

\* Πάτροκλος δὲ φίλῳ ἐπέτειθεθ' ἐταίρῳ·

Αὐτὰρ οὐ γὰρ κρείον μέγα καββαλεῖν ἐν πυρὸς αὐγῇ

Ἐν δὲ ἀραι νοτὸν εἴηκε οἶος καὶ πικρὸς αἶγος.

Τῷ δ' στυγερὰ σιαγόνα ραχὴν τεθαλυῖαν ἀλοιφῇ,

Τῷ δ' ἔχεν Ἀυτομέδων τάμνειν δ' ἀραιὸς Ἀχιλλεύς·

Καὶ

And it need not be surprising, that in more ancient times a greater simplicity was observed, especially in the days of the patriarchs.

It was a very peculiar privilege that the patriarchs were favoured with, namely, that of giving a benediction to their family, when they were going to die. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all endowed with the gift of prophesying, and pronounced blessings that were accomplished in after times.—When Isaac imagined that his death was near, he determined

Και τα μὲν εὐ μισγυλλε κ' ἀμφ' ὀβηλοῖσιν ἐπείρε.  
 Πυρ δὲ Μενόβιαδης δαίην μέγα ἰσοδὸς φῶς·  
 Αὐτὰρ ὅπει ἔωπλῆσε κ' εἰν ἐλεοῖσιν ἔχευε  
 Πάτροκλος μὲν σίτον ἔλῳν ἑσπενείμει τραπέζῃ,  
 Καλοῖς ἐν κἀνεοῖσιν ἀτὰρ κρεῖα νείμειν Ἀχιλλεύς.

HOMER'S ILIAD, 9.

He said; Patroclus o'er the blazing fire  
 Heaps in a brazen vase three chimes entire;  
 The brazen vase Automedon sustains;  
 Which flesh of porker, sheep, and goat contains;  
 Achilles at the genial feast presides,  
 The parts transfixes, and with skill divides.  
 Meanwhile Patroclus sweats the fire to raise;  
 The tent is brighten'd with the rising blaze:  
 Then, when the languid flames at length subside,  
 He strows a bed of glowing embers wide.  
 Above the coals the smoking fragments turns,  
 And sprinkles sacred salt from lifted urns;  
 With bread the glitt'ring canisters they load,  
 Which round the board Menœtius' son bestow'd;  
 Himself oppos'd t' Ulysses full in fight  
 / Each portion parts, and orders ev'ry rite.

See POPE.

determined to give his blessing to Esau, his eldest son; and to have his spirits revived for that purpose, he desired him to make him savoury meat, such as he knew he loved. Esau immediately went about obeying his orders, and repaired to the field to catch something in hunting; but before he returned his younger brother, by the advice of his mother, had supplanted him of the principle benediction.— This conduct of Rebekah and her son, was certainly far from being justifiable. And one would imagine, that as the blessing was obtained by telling a falsehood, it could have had little effect. The case was otherwise; for Jacob obtained the blessing as well as he obtained the birth-right,—and indeed they were inseparably connected by promise. Jacob was now instead of Esau, according to the promise, made to Abraham, and he did not altogether lie when he said he was Esau; for though he was not the eldest by birth, he was, undoubtedly, now the heir of the promise, by agreement. He had now purchased what his brother despised, and it was to be transferred by the father's benediction; Providence so ordered matters, that it was transferred rightly without Isaac's knowing of it. — Isaac did not think that he had done wrong in blessing Jacob instead of Esau, nor did he repent of what he had done, for he says, *I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed.* This part of the character and conduct of Isaac is a little mysterious; for he must have undoubtedly known the agreement between his two sons, concerning the birth-right, and that he had no right to break an agreement which was fairly made, by giving the blessing of superiority to the person  
who



who had not the right of premogeniture. If he did not know of this purchase, it would appear that he was but ill acquainted with his own family. It is probable that the matter might be misrepresented to him, and that this agreement might pass for a temporal purchase of some earthly thing, which was no ways connected with the promise. Be this as it will, Jacob was now *the first horn by right*, and the promise was fulfilled in his family.

Though Providence countenanced the main point in this transaction, we have no reason to believe, that it gave approbation to the fraud that was committed by Jacob and his mother; for we find that Jacob was, in the course of Providence, caught in a similar snare with that which he laid for his brother, when his father-in-law imposed a wife upon him, which he intended not to have taken. To vindicate Jacob from blame in this matter would be absurd, but it must be remembered, that though he had his faults, he yet feared the Lord, and trusted in his promise, which his brother seems not to have done.—It is probable that this conduct of Providence was intended to teach us the sovereignty of divine mercy, in bestowing favours according to the pleasure of the divine will. Though we are certain that the Almighty never acts capriciously, yet it cannot be refused that he acts sovereignly, according to reasons which are very just and righteous;—which, when once they are known to us, will appear fully convincing, and satisfactory. With regard to the decrees of God, there is one safe rule for us to observe, and that is to remember that whatever is absolutely promised and threatened by

by the Almighty, is absolutely decreed : and as for any more we need neither care nor trouble ourselves concerning it, for it never can be an object of either our faith or duty. The decrees of God can extend no further to us, as *matters of faith*, than his *promises* and *threatenings*. *These are predestination revealed*, as far as it is necessary for rational creatures to know any thing concerning it. We do not find that there are any absolute promises or threatenings in the scripture given for or against any persons specifically, since the canon of revelation was received by the churches of the New Testament; or, perhaps it might be made appear that there *never was any such thing*, as far as promises and threatenings extend to the other world. The Almighty has made many absolute promises concerning things to come; these are also all decrees concerning what he will do in the way of mercy, He has also pronounced threatenings against characters that are finally bad, or wicked, but who these are no persons living can tell, for they are not mentioned. The threatening extends to the *final character*, but reveals no names. It will be found upon enquiry, that all the world over the Almighty, both with regard to all men, and all individuals among men, acts towards them, according to what he has said in his word, and that there is not one *secret purpose* of God, concerning either person or thing that is not implied in his promises, and threatenings. Those who are careful to read, and consider well the promises and threatenings of God, will thereby understand as much concerning *predestination* as will do them good, and any more will

only perplex and hurt them. Such as have attempted *philosophically* to discuss this point of religion have only endeavoured to shew their intention, rather than to clear up the subject; and by arguing concerning the divine presence, and the existence of all things that God foreknew, have spoken of their maker, as if he had been such a one as themselves.

That distinction which God made between Jacob and Esau, has been made the ground and foundation of several disputes. That God made a difference between them is manifest and plain, and who has a right to challenge him with doing with his own what he pleases. It may be safely affirmed, that whatever *distinctions*, or *differences* Jehovah makes between one man and another, that he never does injustice to any, or performs an ill thing. If this persuasion rule in the minds of men, that all the displays of divine sovereignty are good, then this sentiment will dispose them to rest satisfied, that no ill can possibly happen by any exertion of this sovereignty. Many who have disputed warmly upon both sides of this question, have argued concerning God, as if he had been some creature. One party make decrees, and an act of predestination necessary to God, and the others make every thing contingent. Neither of these opinions are true, for the Deity is altogether free in all his acts, and might, if he had so pleased, made no settled appointments concerning any creatures like us. If decrees are necessary to God, so far as they respect our happiness and misery, then happiness, and misery proceed necessarily from our maker; and it is even out of the power the Deity himself to act sovereignly. Suppose in  
this



this case the Almighty may be an object of terror, it is impossible that he can be an object of rational love ; for so soon as ever we conceive, that when he does good to some that he cannot do otherwise, we lose all view of benevolence, and can find no obligation binding our minds to gratitude. And on the other hand, when we conceive that he has necessarily decreed evil, and punishment, it will naturally produce fear, and consequently hatred against them. But all disputes upon this subject are endless and unprofitable, and if good men would be satisfied concerning predestination to eternal life, let them read all his promises recorded in scripture, and the connection between these and the divine law, and they will find abundant satisfaction ; and if wicked men would understand what is appointed for the enemies of God, let them read the threatenings denounced against sin and sinners, and they will find all that is in the decrees of God concerning that subject. Those who please to bewilder themselves in search of things that are inscrutable, may go on, but when they have done their utmost, they will find *little satisfaction and less profit*.

It does not appear that men originally are much different in their dispositions ; they are all at their first setting out enemies to GOD, and the true ideas of righteousness ; in this respect *Jacob* and *Esau* were alike, it was the free mercy of God that made the difference. But I must observe here that it does not appear evident from scripture, that there was any *final difference* between *Jacob* and *Esau personally*. Though *Esau* is blamed, and *justly*, for despising his birth-right, the scripture does not affirm any thing

concerning his final and future state. The principle threatenings against Esau relate to his posterity, and the love and hatred of God is spoken of with respect to their national character. Whether Esau was what some call a *reprobate*, or not, cannot be determined, from any thing that is mentioned in scripture. Many men have been raised up by God, that he might display his power and justice, in punishing them for crimes committed in this life, concerning whom we have no right to say any thing, as to the world to come. There is, however, one thing abundantly plain from scripture, and that is, that predestination to happiness, and the free promise of God are of equal extent ; and such as trust God's word and do his will, need not perplex themselves concerning his decrees. The children of the promise are counted for the seed, and all the promises of God concerning eternal life, are absolute decrees, that the promised seed shall enjoy it. With regard to others, whether there were any decrees or not, their sins would condemn them, and the proceedings against all wicked men will be founded upon *express laws*, and not upon secret purposes. It may be safely affirmed, that all that is said in scripture, concerning the purposes of God, will never have any influence upon any persons moral behaviour, till the promises of divine mercy operate upon their minds ; after that they will be very thankful that Jehovah has done what he pleased.

There is something very moving in that interview which happened between Isaac and Esau, after his returning from hunting for the venison of which he had made favourable meat for his father. When his  
father

father told him what had happened, and how his brother had received the blessing that was intended for him, he breaks forth with a strong expostulation, and a deep sense of the loss of his father's blessing. The language is strong and pathetic. 'He cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, bless me also, O my father. And he said, thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. And he said, is he not rightly called Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times;—he took away my birth-right, and behold now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, behold I have made him thy Lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants, and with corn and wine have I sustained him, and what shall I do unto thee now, my son? And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lift up his voice, and wept.'—The whole story is affecting, and the reader cannot help taking part in the distress of Esau, and the more so, when they remember how he lost this blessing—by the fraud of his mother, and his brother.

But, though there had been no immediate interposition of Providence in this affair, Esau deserved both to have lost the birthright, and the blessing, for disobeying his parents. Instead of marrying a wife among the worshippers of the true God as his father had done, he, without advising with his father, or his mother, married wives from among the

*Hittites*



*Hittites, Judith, the daughter of Beer, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon; which were great grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.*—The depriving Esau of the blessing of being of the line of the Messiah, was a punishment of his voluntary disobedience of his father's commandment, with regard to his being unequally yoked with unbelievers. It appears to have been a point established by Abraham, that his seed were not to marry with the Canaanites, to which Isaac agreed, and observed it in practice; but Esau paid no regard to this commandment, but married with those idolatrous heathens among whom they then dwelt. This was a moral reason why he ought to have been deprived of a blessing which he could not inherit in such circumstances; and though his father had been so indulgent as to overlook his fault, for the sake of his venison, it was no reason why he should have received what he had equally forfeited by forming ungodly connections. His mother, who was actually disobeyed and offended, finding his father's indulgence proceeding to an extreme, endeavoured, by a stratagem, to counteract his father's indulgence, and to procure the blessing for the youngest son, whom she took care should not fall into the same snare; for she immediately had him sent away to Padanaram, from whence she herself came, and where he was provided of a wife among the relations of his mother. Esau's mother, who was very particularly offended at his behaviour, was the special instrument of his being punished with the loss of his father's blessing. The lies that she and Jacob her youngest son made, to promote this end, were in no respect

respect commendable, but there was less malignity in their behaviour, when it is considered that, by that means, they prevented a greater evil. Isaac, out of a partial weakness in behalf of his eldest son, was designed to have given him a blessing, which, in all probability, would have been prostituted among Canaanites, and heathens, with whom Esau was now intimately connected. It was in the power of the father to change the birth-right, and give it to another, provided the eldest son did not behave worthily, and it was what ought to have been done, as the father through partiality might neglect to consider the crimes of the first-born. We find that Reuben lost the birth-right by misconduct, and it was given to Joseph \*; and, for the like reason, it was just that Esau should be deprived of his birth-right. There were many things which belonged to the right of primogeniture, that such a person as Esau could never have performed, nor enjoyed. The first-born was consecrated to the Lord, and had a double portion of the estate allotted to him; had a dignity and authority over his brethren; succeeded in the government of the family and kingdom; had a right to challenge the special blessing of his dying parent. He had also the covenant which God made to Abraham, that from his loins the Messiah should come, consigned to him. These prerogatives were not confined to his person only, but descended to the latest posterity, provided they behaved according to the intention of the appointment. These were things which Esau despised, and, for that reason, sold his birth-right, and was therefore

\* 1 Chron. v. 1.

therefore deprived of the blessing. Had Esau been a person qualified for such an office in his father's family, he would have certainly acted by his authority, as his father did to Abraham, and as Jacob did to Isaac.—But, without ever consulting Isaac or Rebekah, and contrary to their express will, he married two wives among the Canaanites, which was a constant grief to them. Isaac indeed seems to have forgot that affront, but Rebekah never did; and, in conclusion, took a severe revenge, by depriving him of the birth-right. We may observe, that though Rebekah and Jacob did not deal fairly in obtaining the blessing of Isaac; yet, as Isaac ratified it after he knew the circumstances, it is manifest he concluded, that this was the true channel in which it ought to have gone.

Esau, like many since his time, never thought of the value of the birth-right till he had lost both it and the blessing, and then he complains grievously, not of himself and his own folly, but of his brother. He gives him names, and calls him an *heeler* and *supplanter*, and threatens him with death; this was adding one sin to another, and making no amends for past misconduct. This is a very common case with mankind, that when they have ruined themselves by their own folly, they lay all the blame upon second causes. The *first parent of our race* began *this practice*, and it will continue while the world stands. *The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, gave to me and I did eat.—The serpent beguiled me*, says the woman.—Thus, instead of blaming our own folly, we endeavour to apologize



gize for our crimes, and make excuses for sin, and mean to cover iniquity.

While Isaac was in the land of the Philistines, he was so fortunate and successful, that the people became jealous of him. When Abraham was in that country formerly, his servants had digged wells for watering their flocks; these, after his departure, had been filled up by the Philistines, so that now there was nothing to be seen, except the original marks were they once were. But as there was more certainty of finding water where the old wells were, than in digging new ones, the servants of Isaac opened the old ones, and found springs of water. This occasioned a contest between the people of the country and the servants of Isaac; the one digged the wells, and the other claimed the water. The first for which they contended, they called *Esek*, which signifies *contention*; the second *Sitnah*, which signifies *hatred*. Isaac's servants were obliged to remove from Gerar, where they digged another well, for which there was no strife; and, for this reason, they called it *Rehoboth*, which signifies *room*. The ancients were exceedingly particular in observing the events of Providence, even in what we would be ready to call trifling circumstances. They gave names to places on account of certain actions exceedingly *apropos*, and characteristic.—This they did to perpetuate the memory of the action, by the name imposed upon the place or person that was principally concerned therein.

After Isaac was departed from Gerar, Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, sent two of his principal ministers to make a league with him, which shews

that he was a person of great consideration in those parts. If Isaac had not considered the promise of Canaan, and of the Messiah coming in his family, of more consequence than all other things, he might easily have settled a government, and made himself a king; but temporal dominion was not the main object of his pursuit. He had his eye upon a better country, than the earthly Canaan, and therefore passed his time like a pilgrim, and a stranger upon this earth. We do not find that he claimed any settled property in any country upon earth, but went from one land to another, like a stranger, till he should be called to *that rest which remains for the people of God*.—There are several respects in which Isaac was a type of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

1. He was a fruit of the divine promise, as our Saviour was.—The Messiah was long promised before he came, but at last he appeared according as he was promised. Isaac was promised to Abraham many years before his mother brought him forth, but the promise held good, and at last was fulfilled.

2. Isaac was offered in sacrifice, and his father received him in a figure from the dead.—Jesus was really offered up, and died, and rose from the dead the third day, according to the Scriptures.

3. Isaac had no property in the land where he dwelt.—The Son of Man had no where to lay his head. Jesus claimed no property in the kingdoms of this world; but, like Isaac, lived as a pilgrim and stranger upon this earth. Though our Redeemer

deemer had a just right to all things in this world he claimed nothing.

4. Isaac, as the head and master of his house, blessed Jacob concerning things to come ; and Jesus, as the head of his church, before he ascended to heaven blessed his disciples, and promised to send them the Holy Ghost. *He led them out as far as Bethany ; and, when he had blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven* \*.

\* Luke xxiv. 50.



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## LECTURE XV.

*The History and Character of JACOB.—His Dream.—His Ladder.—His Marriage.—His procuring the best of LABAN'S Cattle.—His wrestling with GOD at Peniel.—How he knew that it was JEHOVAH with whom he wrestled, &c.*

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GENESIS xxviii. 1, 2, 3, &c.

*And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.*

*Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.*

*And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayst be a multitude of people, &c.*

**I**SAAC and Rebekah appear to have been exceedingly anxious concerning Jacob's marriage; and particularly that he should not marry a wife of the daughters of Heth. The language of Rebekah is very strong—*Rebekah said unto Isaac, I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these*

*these of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do to me?*—Jacob, before he went away from his father's house, had a repetition of his father's blessing conferred upon him;—which plainly shews, that what Isaac had done, without knowing what he did, he confirmed afterwards when his judgment was clear, and also the violence of his disorder abated. Moses informs us, that 'Isaac  
' called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him,  
' and said unto him, thou shalt not take a wife of  
' the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-  
' aram, to the house of Bethuel, thy mother's fa-  
' ther; and take a wife from thence of the daugh-  
' ters of Laban, thy mother's brother. And God  
' Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and  
' multiply thee, that thou mayst be a multitude of  
' people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham,  
' to thee, and to thy seed with thee, that thou  
' mayst inherit the land wherein thou art a stran-  
' ger, which God gave to Abraham.'—So Isaac sent  
away Jacob to Padan-aram with his blessing, as  
Abraham had blessed Isaac before. All this clearly  
proves that Jacob was the true object of the pater-  
nal blessing, and not Esau, who had sold it for a  
mess of pottage, along with the birth-right. To  
all this behaviour of Isaac towards Jacob Esau ap-  
pears to have been a witness, or at least fully in-  
formed thereof; for, it is said, 'When Esau saw  
' that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away  
' to Padan-aram to take a wife from thence; and  
' that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, say-  
' ing thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of  
' Canaan; and that Jacob obeyed his father and his  
mother

‘ mother and was gone to Padan-aram; and Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father, then Esau went unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had, *Mahalath*, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.’ Esau now began to perceive his past folly, and disobedience, without observing the right method of reforming his life. He perceived what he might have done long before, namely, that his father and mother were offended at his rash and ungodly marriages, that he had contracted with the idolatrous people of the land; and, for this reason, as he was inclined to have more wives, he went and took one of the daughters of Ishmael. This connexion was not much more laudable than the former ones, that Esau had formed with the people of the land; for the Ishmaelites became very early a wicked people; even Ishmael himself never had a good character in things pertaining to God; for he was always a wild man, and delighted in hunting, and of a barbarous disposition. A connection with the daughters of Ishmael was not much better than that which he had entered into with the daughters of Heth. Such alliances between the families of Ishmael and Esau might suit the tempers of people who were alike in disposition, but could not answer the great end of the promise, which was to promote the worship of the true God in the family of Abraham.

When Jacob left his father’s house to go to Mesopotamia, we hear of nothing he carried with him, except a staff in his hand. This, one would think, did not well agree with the account of Isaac’s riches,  
which



which Moses has given us before. To send away his son in such a low and destitute manner, seems not well to comport with the riches of the patriarch. But we are to remember, that some things here are understood, which are not expressed. Though Jacob could not carry very much with him, and, on that account, it is not mentioned how much, or what things he carried, yet, from one circumstance, we may conjecture that he was not sent away altogether destitute. Oil, which in that country is an article of food, and a valuable commodity, was a part of Jacob's provender in his journey; and he appears to have had abundance of this article: for after his vision, which we shall consider in a little, he set up a pillar, and poured oil upon it, which shews that he was not scarce of this commodity; and it may also be inferred, that he had other things necessary for his journey, though they are not expressly specified. Some of the Hebrew writers affirm, that Isaac sent away Jacob with plenty of all things, much in the same manner that Abraham sent away Eliezer to the same place of the country; but that *Eliphaz, the son of Esau*, hearing of his departure, pursued him with a company of armed men, and robbed him of all that he had; and that this was the reason when he met with Rachel at the well, with her father's flocks, that he wept, because he had no present to give her, as was customary in those times, and places, of the world. This is only conjecture, and we must suffer it to pass as such; for the Jewish writers are always fond of magnifying matters concerning any thing that relates to their own history.

Jacob

Jacob appears to have travelled a great way the first day he set out, and if we consider that he must have had some things to carry, it was an extraordinary day's journey. Between *Beersheba* and *Luz*, the distance is forty-eight miles, which is a long day's journey, to a man that was obliged to carry his provender along with him. The Jews, who when they speak of the patriarchs, are always ready to magnify matters affirm, that upon the day that Jacob went from *Beersheba*, God wrought sundry miracles, and among the rest, shortened the hours and made the sun go down before the usual time. Such a miracle one would think intirely unnecessary, and instead of being of any service to Jacob, would have been a disadvantage; for forty-eight miles required rather a long than a short day, for a traveller to accomplish.

The place where Jacob lodged the first night was near a place called *Luz*, which signifies an almond or nut tree, and probably, was either an *almond* or *hazel grove*, and fit for a cover, from both the heat of the sun, or the influence of stormy weather.— This, Jacob choose as a convenient place to rest in the first night. Though Jacob had only the earth for his *bed*, and a *stone* for his *pillow*, and the *sky* for his *covering*, yet he slept sound, and in all his life time before, had never such an agreeable night's rest. The God of his fathers, Abraham, and Isaac, had now taken him under his immediate protection, and had become his guide, and, on this occasion informed him under whose care he was. In this grove he dreamed a dream, and saw in vision a ladder, that reached from heaven to earth, and the angels of God ascending and descending thereon. The solemnity of  
of

of this dream had a great effect upon his spirits, and filled his soul with the most reverend ideas of the Almighty. On the top of this ladder. Moses says, that Jacob saw Jehovah, and, that he heard him renew the promise, which he had made to Abraham and renewed to Isaac, with some additional blessings promised to him.—While he was considering the vision he heard these words:—*I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and I will bring thee again into this land; and I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* These words were, undoubtedly very comforting to Jacob, who was now altogether cast upon Providence, and had neither friend nor connection in the world near him. This was a seasonable visit of God to Jacob, and served instead of all other comforts.

What is most surprizing is, how Jacob could know angels when he saw them; or, how he could, in the vision, distinguish Jehovah on the top of the ladder, from all the other beings that appeared unto him? Angels are said to be *immaterial spirits*, and consequently invisible to human eyes, so that it appears something paradoxical how they can be seen, so as to be known to be angels. Whatever there may be immaterial in angels, it appears plain, that when they act in a system of matter, they are



obliged to have material vehicles to move in, otherwise we have no conceptions how they can act; and it is not improbable, that every angel has a material vehicle peculiar to *himself*, as well as every man has a body, in which his spirit acts, without which he could not perform any offices in a material system. Jacob might know the angels, both from the *place from whence they came*, namely, *heaven*, and from a *certain majesty*, which attended their appearance; or, from some *spiritual sympathy* between his own mind and them, at the nearness of their approach unto him.

That angels are ministering spirits, whom the Almighty sends upon errands of salvation to his people is very plain, but that they are altogether immaterial, is not so easily made appear. Whenever they become visible, we are sure there is something material about them, otherwise they could not be objects of human sight. The very idea of motion implies something material, and our ideas of motion are only conceptions of things spiritual, according to what we have learned of material motion. Even a ladder reaching from heaven to the earth in a vision, bears some relation to material form; and though it was a symbol of heavenly spiritual truth, yet, as an object of sight, its form was material. Concerning this ladder, there have been many conjectures. It may be observed that the whole was a vision setting forth both *present* and *future things*: by this ladder Jacob was instructed of that communication between God and his people, which is established by the interposition of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and that under *his administration* angels, and all heavenly power

*powers are servants to his church.* The form of a ladder was intended to teach Jacob, that men come by degrees to a perfection of happiness; and, that as ladder is ascended step by step, so believers go on from one degree to another till they appear before the Lord, in the heavenly Zion. It was a very fit emblem, to inform the patriarch that he was to pass through many changes and vicissitudes of life, before he, and his seed, should inherit the promised land; but as the top of the ladder reached heaven, and had the Lord for its manager above, who makes all things work for good to his people, so that Providence, which had now taken him under its protection, would never forsake him till it had perfected the whole promise that had been made to Abraham.— This ladder which reached from heaven to earth, was both an emblem of the promise itself, which comprehended the promise of the earthly Canaan to Abraham's posterity, and the promise of heaven to his seed, according to the promise. It respected both things temporal and things spiritual, the first in enjoyment, are things in this world, but the great end of the promise are things in heaven. Jacob's ladder may also be comprehended as a figure of the body of Christ, which unites the human and divine nature; in his flesh we see God, and have the perfections of the Deity manifestly displayed; and in that same flesh we see Emanuel *God with us*, related to us *through our Redeemer Christ Jesus*. Our access to Jehovah is attained by our union to Jesus Christ, and it is by faith in him that we can approach to the most high. When Jacob saw Jehovah upon the top of the ladder above, it plainly implied that it was by

*descending or ascending* the ladder that the distance could be removed. In the flesh of the son of man *Jehovah* has come down the whole distance, and through union to Jesus Christ, believers ascend together with him into that heavenly rest, which he has prepared for his people.

Not to pursue uncertain conjectures, which many have contrived concerning this ladder which Jacob saw in his vision, it may be observed in general, that the whole intention thereof was to shew, that all gracious communication between God and man was obtained, and supported by the promised grace manifested through the Messiah; and that the channel, through which all promised mercy is bestowed, is the man Christ Jesus, who, by uniting in his person the nature of *God* and *man*, as well as the interests of both, has established a perpetual intercourse between sinners and a holy and righteous *Jehovah*.

It is highly probable that Jacob, in this vision, was able to distinguish the appearance of *Jehovah* from all other phenomena in it, from his appearing in that well known character of that angel which appeared to Abraham, called the angel *Jehovah*. The Messiah, before his actual appearance in human flesh, on many occasions, assumed a visible character, and was seen by the Old Testament believers; and it is not improbable that the shape and appearance was the same with that which he exhibited in the days of his flesh. It seems to have been such, that the glory thereof far surpassed the most splendid appearance of any created angel; and to have been so characteristic that it was no sooner perceived than the characters of *Jehovah* shone forth therein. Jacob  
might



might also be assured that this personage was *Jehovah*, from the homage he saw the angels pay him when they ascended and descended upon this ladder. It is however certain, that Jacob knew that it was the Lord, and has given him the highest title that language ever gave him. However agreeable the vision was in the time of the dream, it seems to have left a very grave impression on the mind of Jacob; for when he awaked he considered the place where we had slept as *the house of God*, and the *gate of heaven*. His words are very expressive;—*Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I knew it not.—And he was afraid, and said, how dreadful or venerable is this place? this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.* This speech of Jacob points out the wildness of his imagination, and the effects that the vision had upon him, for it rather appears to have in it the reveries of a person beside himself, than one of sound judgment. He speaks as if the vision had some special relation to that place, and was not to be obtained in any other place as well as that. He calls it the house of God, as if the Almighty had dwelt in any particular place; he calls it the gate of heaven, as if the only entrance to heaven had been there. The whole of his speech seems to imply that there were some particular places, where the Almighty took more pleasure to reveal himself than others. This was indeed a part of the theology of the ancients, which, probably Jacob had learned by tradition; which, when the awe of the vision was upon his mind, made him express himself in this manner. What this place was not before Jacob, made it, viz. the house of God,

God, by which he seems to understand a place consecrated to God, or his service; for we cannot well suppose that Jacob believed in tutelar divinities, or household gods, as the heathens did. It is rather probable, that the notion of tutelar deities proceeded from a perversion of this story, and other practices of the patriarchs.

On this occasion Jacob set up the stone that was his pillow, for a pillar, and memorial of this vision, and poured oil upon the top thereof. This was a sort of consecration of that stone, for the purpose of a memorial, to keep up the memory of this event. pillars, and heaps of stones were, in the patriarchal periods, used for altars, but we do not find that oil of itself was ever offered in sacrifice: This action of Jacob appears to have been only a ceremony of consecration which was allowed before the giving of the law; but after the law was given, the erecting of pillars, statues, and altars were expressly forbidden. Jacob gave this place a name from the event that happened: because God appeared to him in that place, he called it his house, viz. *Bethel*, but formerly it was *Luz*, a place of nuts; and the city that was built in the neighbourhood thereof was not called Bethel at the first, but Luz. There was no city here, at this time, though Moses speaks as if there had been one; but when his words are strictly considered, they only shew that the city which was called Bethel in his time, was at first by the inhabitants named Luz; and had its name changed in memory of this vision afterwards. The grove where Jacob slept received the name of Bethel immediately from him, though the inhabitants (if there were

were any there at that time) who knew nothing of this transaction, gave its name from the nuts or almonds which grew there.

Before Jacob left this place, he vowed a vow unto the Lord, that he would devote the tenth of all he should ever have to the Almighty. This is the first vow that we read of in Scripture; and if there were any before, they are not recorded by Moses. Vows were promises made to the Lord to devote something to his service. They differ from *promises* and *covenants* in general, in this respect; that a vow always supposes something devoted, whereas a promise or covenant implies the fulfilling of one's word, or performing the part of an agreement. Jacob's vow was *a promise that Jehovah should be his God*, and that *that place where he had the vision should be God's house*, and that of all that the Lord gave him he would devote the tenth to him. A simple promise may respect any thing that is in a man's power to do, which, in consequence of his promise, he is obliged to perform; or it may consist of not doing what, before his promise, he might lawfully have done. A covenant supposes two parties engaged, and something binding upon them both, according to the terms of the agreement. In all covenants, promises, and vows, the Lord is a witness and judge, but not always a party. To all who engage in vows, covenants, and promises, God is a principal object of consideration; for his presence is always understood, and his name frequently mentioned in such transactions. An oath is an appeal to his judgment, and a calling him to witness to the truth of what is  
sworn



sworn. In vows, promises, and oaths, there is only one party engaged ; but in a covenant there is two. If two persons swear an oath each to perform a part of an agreement, the transaction is then both an oath and a covenant. Such was the transaction between Isaac and Abimelech, and such was that between Abraham and that king's father ; such was that between Jacob and Laban, and such was that between David and Jonathan. This vow which Jacob made, according to our version of the passage where it is recorded, was conditional ; whereas, in the nature of the thing, it was absolute \*.

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*\* Va yddar Jacob Neder le-Omer, im-yehejeh Elohim immadi Va shemarani Ba derek baseb after anobi Holeke Ve-natan-li lechem le-Echol ve beged le-lehosh. Ve-Sabati, Be-Shatom Elbeth Abi vahajah yeh vah li Le-Elohim.*

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, ' Seeing Jehovah will be with me, and will keep me in his way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on ; and I also come back to my father's house in peace, even Jehovah shall be my God.' There are no conditions in all this, but an expression of Jacob's belief that God would be with him, and keep him ; and, for that reason, he promises to do all things in his strength.

The Hebrew particle (*Im*) in ver. 20, chap. xxviii. ought to be rendered *seeing* or *since*, and then it implies Jacob's faith in the divine promise, that was made to him in the vision mentioned immediately before ; but, as it is rendered in our version, it makes Jacob appear doubtful of the promise of Jehovah, who had given him the strongest reasons to put trust in him. Upon the whole, Jacob's vow is a promise made upon the faithfulness of the divine word, that as God was so gracious as to give his promise to be his God, and to be with him, he would not hesitate to call him his God, and devote the tenth of all that he had to his service.

This vow which Jacob made, seems to have proceeded from the warmth of his affections to God, for the favours he had bestowed upon him, in giving him such a full and free declaration of his good will concerning him. In both his words and his actions there appears such an hurry and rapidity, that one would think that he was in such haste, that he could not well tell what to say or do first. When the heart is full, it pushes on all the powers of the mind and body to speak and act in a kind of hurry. It was no wonder that Jacob vowed a vow to the Lord when he had received such favours from him, when it is plain that devotion was all that he could give; and what he promised Jehovah was only what he had received.—But there is no question that if he had been in possession of ten thousand times more, he would have devoted it all for the continuance of such displays of divine glory. There is something in the manifestations of the Deity so sweet and entertaining to the minds of believers, that they would part with all things rather than want them. Strangers to true godliness consider divine intercourse with the souls of his people as a sort of religious madness; but let them first taste, and they will be obliged to acknowledge that God is good, and that such as trust in him are blessed. The finest speculations in philosophy are dry and insipid when compared with the enjoyments of religion. Jacob had more real pleasure in his almond grove, in one night, than all the philosophers that have ever yet been in the world have enjoyed from their acquisitions in science; and he obtained a more excellent discovery, and of more

advantage to mankind, than ever *Galileo* or *Sir Isaac Newton* did. In this vision he saw the days of the Messiah a-far off, and rejoiced; and, in conclusion, had confirmed to him in express words that Christ should come of his seed. This was not only an honour promised to his family, but the ground of all his hope for enjoying the kingdom of heaven; and as he was now going to a strange place to sojourn for a season, this promise was his comfort in all his trials and vicissitudes. There is nothing that supports the minds of believers in trouble, like the word of the faithful witness.

One article of Jacob's vow was that he would give the tenth of all that Providence bestowed upon him to the Lord. In what sense he devoted the tenth of his substance to the Lord *Moses* has not informed us; or for what reason he devoted a tenth more than any other part of his substance. All that can be said upon this subject is mere conjecture. This is the second time we have any account of tithes in the Old Testament; and it is plain that they were voluntary offerings, and not required by any express law of the Almighty. After they were promised it was necessary to pay them, on account of a promissory obligation, but this extended only to the person who made the promise. At this time there was no divine law existing, that required any tithes, nor do we hear of any, except *Abraham* and *Jacob*, that paid any before the giving of the law. It is highly probable that the tenths at first were intended for the supply of the poor, as well as to procure those things which belonged to religion. In the days of *Jacob* there were no priests; every



every man was priest in his own family, and therefore there were no tithes given to any clergy before the giving of the law by Moses. All believers then, as under the New Testament now, were the clergy, or inheritance of the Lord. While the family of Abraham continued in their wandering, and pilgrimage state, and were not formed into a commonwealth, they had neither clergy, nor laws concerning tithes. Every family was a church, and independent of all others, except so far as they agreed concerning the appointments of God, which were, by a divine revelation, given to them all.—The appointment of a different form of government and religion was imposed upon them, on account of their obstinacy, after they became numerous, and were divided into many families in one society. It was not easily to be expected that the seed of Abraham, after they amounted to 600,000, would all submit to the jurisdiction of one man, as the families of the patriarchs did, without first having a body of laws, to adjust what was necessary in matters of superiority, or subordination. The Almighty, to remove all ideas of supremacy in any one person, took them under his own jurisdiction, and constituted a theocracy, wherein all their laws and appointments came immediately from himself. He then became their lawgiver, their father, and their God. Thus the patriarchal government gave place to a theocracy, and the tithes and gifts, which were given by the people to officers appointed to receive them, were, in effect, offerings to the Almighty, as acknowledgments of his supremacy over the whole people of Israel. The tribe of

Levi, which was separated from all the people of Israel, was, by an appointment of God, substituted instead of the first-born among all the tribes of Israel; so that what, in the patriarchal period, belonged to the eldest son in matters of religion, by the law of Moses belonged to the Levites. The share that the Levites and priests had in the tithes, and offerings, that were offered to the Lord, were all the inheritance that they had among their brethren; they were allowed to purchase no lands, nor in the division of Canaan had they any share among the rest, except some cities, and a portion of land that lay around, or near them. This was not personal or real estates to individuals, but belonged to the tribe in general. If a priest had been never so rich, he was not allowed to purchase any land which might become an inheritance to his family distinct from the other priests and Levites. The whole tribe were in a peculiar manner the Lord's, and what was given to them by the rest of the tribes was given to the Lord. This society of consecrated and devoted men, were formed by a divine appointment, to be the objects of the bounty of the whole people of Israel; and thereby the whole people were taught, that by paying their tithes and offerings to them, they paid an homage to the God of Israel. This was only a temporary institution, to continue during the time of the Jewish commonwealth, but to cease as soon as the Messiah was come; for after that, the law of the priesthood was changed, and there was no authority for tithes by divine appointment. As soon as there was no tribe of Levites consecrated to God,—restrained  
from

from intermeddling with civil affairs, then the law for receiving tithes ceased. All laws appointed by civil governments concerning tithes are absurd, and ridiculous; because they generally proceed upon principles opposite to the first institution. The tenths were all that the Levites had both for themselves and the poor; for they were not permitted to have any inheritance like the rest of their brethren, and were once in three years to give a large dividend to the poor amongst the people of the land. In modern times, the receivers of tithes may be the sons of noblemen, who have many thousands a-year of paternal or acquired inheritance, and are allowed to interfere in all civil as well as religious affairs, which was not the case with the Levites. In the patriarchal period tithes were voluntary, and there was no law concerning them; and the law that was made for a season is now come to an end; so that tithes paid to religious men are absurd and irreligious. For what reason Jacob made this promise is not easy to determine; his heart was full on account of the favour he had received, and he promised the tithes of what he should receive, out of gratitude to God for the favour he had conferred upon him. Jacob was well off, provided he had no more to pay out of his substance but a tenth to the Lord; for in some places the people are obliged to pay the sixth part to a set of spurious Levites, who do nothing for their money, except oppress the poor, and profane religious institutions.

When Jacob set out from Luz, we hear no more concerning him till we find him among the people of the  
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the east, near Harran, by a well of water, conversing with the shepherds of Mesopotamia. This place of the country did not lye east from Beer-sheba, though it lay eastward from part of the land of Canaan, and on that account may be said to lye toward the east. The Hebrew word *kedem*, signifies *ancient*, or *antiquity*; and, perhaps, the words of Moses may read, that Jacob came into the land of the ancient people, because the first inhabitants of the earth after the flood settled near about that part of the world. Be this as it will, it was Mesopotamia that he came to, where the city of Nahor was, and where his posterity now resided. The feeding of flocks in that part of the world was a principal exercise both for men and women; and a more pleasant and agreeable one is not perhaps to be found in any country. It does not appear that springs and rivulets were abundant in that part of the world; we read of wells, which were covered, where water was drawn for the flocks. This was a piece of the severest exercise belonging to the employment of shepherds. In all champagne countries, springs and rivulets are not so plenty as in the mountainous parts of the globe, or where mountains and vallies are alternate. Wells and springs of water, both in Palastine and Syria, are scarce, and very valuable; but Providence so ordered, that what was not to be found running in an open channel, was in plenty in the bowels of the earth. For this reason they digged wells, of which they drew water for themselves and their flocks. We read in the 84th psalm, that they digged wells to receive the rain that came down from  
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the heavens, which, in those warm parts of the world, could not be very long pleasant to drink.—However, as all countries have generally what serves the purpose of the inhabitants, the Syrians made a shift to serve themselves and their flocks with what the country afforded. Many remarkable pieces of scripture history were transacted at wells, which shews that there was ordinary much concourse at them. Isaac met with Rebekah at the side of a well, and his son Jacob met his beloved Rachel at another.—They do not appear to have been the same,—the one seems to have been near the city, the other in the fields, where the flocks were feeding, or at least resting till each had its turn for water.

After putting a few questions to the shepherds, and receiving some answers, Jacob met with Rachel, but we do not hear that he was so well provided with ear-rings and bracelets as Abraham's servant was; for he had nothing to give her but a kiss.—This perhaps had more effect in his favour, than a dry gift; his father offered his suit by proxy but Jacob came in person. The Jews say, that our patriarch was robbed, and it looks very like it, otherwise he would certainly had something more than a kiss to give his mother's brother's daughter, when he met her. Moses says that he kissed her and lift up his voice and wept;—perhaps, both for grief and joy—for grief that he had no present to give such a fine young woman, according to the custom of that country,—for joy that he had found that Laban had such a beautiful daughter, with whom he had some hopes of being nearly connected. He would, no  
doubt

doubt, tell her the whole story of his travels, and his misfortunes, if he had any; if he was robbed, he would tell the manner how, to serve for an apology for coming so empty.—And, there is no doubt but he would say the handsomest things he could in behalf of himself, and speak as soft things to the young damsel as prudence directed him. It appears to have been a strange sort of an interview, and to have had a good deal of comic in it,—first to kiss a fine woman, and then to cry like a child.—Ah Jacob! one cannot tell whether this was cunning or weakness in thee; thou wast, in former times, an arch young man, and knew how to pursue thine own interest, and this has the appearance of some design upon the heart of Rachel. Moses tells us nothing that he said, but that he told her he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son. In the first of those he told a lie, for he was Laban's sister's son. But he was in a *flutter*, and wist not well what he said. Those who have ever felt the thrills of the virtuous passion of love, will know how to make an apology for Jacob, and bear with him in this embarrassment. He went on purpose to Padanaram to seek a wife, and amidst all the vicissitudes of the journey, would no doubt, be thinking upon his main errand, and having so unexpectedly met with Rachel, all the sparks of nature and affection would, no doubt, kindle in his soul.

It is something unfortunate for persons in love, that they generally say the worst things, when they should say the best; that whimsical passion puts the the spirits into such a flutter, that a man is no more master of himself.—Begging the pardon of the  
graver



graver part of my audience, this is really the case, and appears to have been the case of the patriarch, notwithstanding that he was *the son of the promise*, and had seen God at Bethel. Religion may regulate, but cannot extirpate nature. A godly man cannot help being in love, more than a profligate, and he would not be a good man if he were not so.

As soon as Rachel heard his plaintive tale, she ran as fast as she could unto her father to inform him what had happened, and who she had met with. Whether she told Laban that her cousin kissed her, Moses does not say but she told as much as made him understand, that his sister's son was near at hand. There is something in relationship, however much men may differ in some things, that has a wonderful attraction, and shews that there is a sympathy in blood more than there is water. *When Laban heard the tidings of his sister's son, he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house.* This was no more than might have been expected from so near a relation, whom he had never seen in his life before. Jacob was soon put into service, and had his wages appointed him; or it was rather referred to himself to ask what he would have. He did not hesitate a moment, he said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel. Laban, probably, did not expect that he would make such a demand, nor would one have thought that, in such a situation, he would have made such a request; but love seldom pursue the rules of prudence, when a fine object is in view. Jacob had no dowry to give, but service, and he would rather work hard than want Rachel; but seven years were a long time,

provided he was only in expectation,—the object was however constantly before him, and the confabulations of love made the time appear short.—Seven years stealed away like a few hours ; when one is engaged in pleasant conversation, they seldom hear the clock strike, nor know any thing of the swiftness of hours and minutes. Jacob's seven years seemed to him as a few days, for the love that he bore to Rachel. This piece of story would furnish a fine occasion for a tale about shepherds and shepherdeses ; and, perhaps, many of the Arcadian tales have been taken from this, or some similar eastern practices. But Providence was more concerned in this affair, than in these stories.—It was a design of God to bring about something more noble and excellent than to lay a foundation for an eastern tale. Our patriarch was now to be tried, punished, enriched, delivered, and made a great man, merely by the hand of Providence. When Jacob had served seven years he then demanded his wife, according to agreement. This Laban assented to, but in conclusion imposed a cheat upon him. It was the custom in those parts to bring the bride to bed covered with a veil, and without lights ; this was done out of modesty, but afforded an opportunity for Laban to substitute Leah, his eldest daughter, instead of Rachel, whom Jacob loved, and for whom he had performed seven years servitude. This was far from being either discreet, or honest ; for Laban ought to have mentioned at first that he could not, according to custom, give the younger before the elder. Perhaps he thought, that if he had his *blear-eyed Leah* fairly off his

his hands, he would easily find a match for his beautiful Rachel. However this might be, Laban now supplanted Jacob, as he had done his brother before; so Providence ordered that he might learn to be ingenious, and give over telling lies, as he had done to his father, when he supplanted his brother Esau of the blessing.—Jacob did not know till next morning that he was imposed upon, but was angry with his father-in-law for the treatment he had given him. But it served for nothing, for he was answered, that it was contrary to the custom of the country to give the youngest sister before the eldest. Laban, however, to satisfy him, informed him, that if he would serve seven years for Rachel, that he should have her also. This would in our times be called incest, though we do not find that the patriarch is charged with any crime for marrying two sisters. The law of Moses says, that a man must not take a wife to her sister, to vex her in her life-time; but this does not say that it was any sin to marry her sister after she was dead, nor do we find that the ancients made any ceremony in this matter, or that they were ever reprov'd for it by the Almighty. The New Testament says, that every man is to have but one wife at once, but does not meddle with this point, nor affirm that it is incest to marry his wife's sister, after that his wife is dead. What is neither forbidden by the Old Testament, nor the New, can never fix moral guilt in the sight of God, though it may be a transgression of the political laws of several nations, and be punishable by those laws. Among the Greeks there was an abominable practice, of a man marry-



ing his father's wife, but this was very different from marrying his wife's sister after she was dead, which the law of Moses does not condemn, and concerning which even the gospel has said nothing, either one way or another. This will perhaps be considered by some as a libertine way of speaking; but if any one will shew that it is contrary to scripture, I shall confess the error, and forsake it immediately. It is certainly wrong either to make more sins or duties than God hath made; and though it may have the appearance of strictness to be zealous in doubtful things, yet the best name that it deserves is *bigotry*. If marrying of two sisters be incest, then Jacob was a great sinner, and deserved to be punished: but, had he been living in such a horrible sin as that of incest, it is not conceivable how he should have been a prophet of the Lord, and such a favourite of heaven as he really was. The assemblies of the clergy, and the spiritual courts, may say what they please, but till they can shew that Jacob was guilty of incest, from Scripture, he ought to be considered as innocent.

Some have been of the opinion that Jacob served seven years for Rachel before he was married to her; but this is not at all probable; and the age of some of Jacob's children, which were born during the time of their marriage, plainly shews the contrary; and it is plain that Joseph was born before the fourteen years were expired. What makes some think that Jacob served other seven years for Rachel is, that Laban desired him to fulfil her week, which they suppose was a week of years.—But all that is meant by a week in this place, is a week

week of festivity, which was usual in marriages in those parts : for example, Sampson's marriage lasted seven days, which was a common thing in all the marriages of that part of the world. All that Laban meant was, that after the seven days of Leah's marriage was ended, that Jacob should fulfil *another week for Rachel*, and after that serve him seven years *for a dowry*. This seems to be the sense of the passage, and the scope of Moses in that part of the history. What evidently confirms this sentiment is, the 30th verse of chapter 29th, where it is said, *And he went in also into Rachel, and he loved her also, more than Leah, and served with him seven other years.*

It was customary in those parts for persons of rank and condition, to give their daughters maid-servants along with them, who were called *hand-maids* : this is what has been practised in other parts of the world ; but in those parts when a wife was barren, and not likely to have children, they gave their maids to their husbands, in the character of concubines, and called the children which they brought forth their own. This shews that they had a strong inclination to have children, either of their own body, or in their own name. The Jews give many reasons for this, and among others, that they were all earnest to be the mother of the Messiah, whom they believed was to come ; and for that reason, used all means possible to have children. Whatever there might have been in this, the practice appears in itself a little whimsical, and cannot be accounted for upon the foundation of any modern principles.

Jacob's

Jacob's affections were still more strong towards Rachel than Leah, but there was one thing which was a drawback on the side of Rachel,—she was barren, and had no children, which rendered her exceedingly peevish. Leah, on the other hand, was fruitful, and had children, which, in a great measure made amends for the want of beauty. Leah had brought forth *Reuben*, *Simeon*, and *Levi*, before ever Rachel had any children, which made Jacob's beloved wife fret exceedingly, and at last break forth in a very unbecoming, and irreverent exclamation; *give me children, or then I die*. Jacob gave her a severe reproof, and spoke with great warmth on that occasion; but the matter was settled, and Rachel gave her maid *Bilhah* to her husband, who brought him forth a son in due time, which she called *Dan*, and not long after brought him another whose name was *Naphthali*. This so far satisfied Rachel, till God remembered her in proper time, and gave her a son of her own, whose name was *Joseph*,—and whose character we shall have occasion to consider at large afterwards. Before this, Leah had taken the course that her sister had done, and given her maid *Zilpah* to Jacob, who had brought him forth several sons, and, in conclusion, she brought him other two sons, and one daughter. These made a tolerable large family to Jacob, which made him think of returning home to his father in the land of Canaan. He had all this while made but little for his family, and therefore wanted to go to his own country to provide for them, but his father-in-law opposed this measure, because he found that the Lord had blessed



fed him for Jacob's sake. He, therefore asked what wages he would have? Jacob proposed a scheme that Laban readily agreed to, which in the end enriched Jacob, and sadly vexed his father-in-law. This is a most curious part of the history and character of Jacob. When the patriarch had made the agreement with his father-in-law, concerning having none except the spotted and speckled of the flock for his hire, Laban removed all the speckled among the sheep and the goats three days distance, and placed them under the care of his sons. This was done with a design that none of the parti-coloured amongst the sheep, or goats, should have any communication with the rest. By this, Laban imagined that Jacob would have but poor wages, and would be obliged to continue longer in his service; or, at least, obtain but a small emolument for his service. The matter turned otherwise. Jacob, whether by divine appointment, or from his own invention, took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut tree; and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering-troughs, when the flocks came to drink; that they should conceive when they came to drink. And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ring-straked, speckled, and spotted. And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks towards the ring-straked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban: and he put his own flocks by themselves; and put them not into Laban's cattle. And it came to pass whensoever the stronger cattle

*did*

did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the guttars, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's.

The point here to be determined is, Whether this was a natural cause to produce such an effect as is attributed to it? Could the piled rods, placed in the troughs where the flocks were drinking, work so upon their imagination, as to make them conceive parti-coloured young. Much has been said concerning the strength of imagination in female conception; but, it does not appear that there ever were such an universal instance as this,—where it held so generally in so many creatures at one time. The making of rods in this form might indeed serve Jacob's purpose, because he might form them into the shape of rams, or he-goats, that when the flocks came to drink, and seeing this phenomenon, might be more ready to take the speckled, than such as were of any other colour. The Hebrew word *Jicam*, signifies literally to *become hot*, or to *be warm*, and answers to these words in the Latin *coitum appetere*. The females among the flocks seeing this appearance every time they came to drink water, might make them fonder of the rams that were like these rods, than any of a white colour. The only difficulty which is now in the way, is, that Laban had removed all the speckled of the flock three days journey from all the rest, so that they could not come together. The journies of flocks and herds for one day cannot be supposed to be long; nor do we imagine that they were driven  
any

any farther than they would go in feeding, as they went along. The distance of two or three days journey, in this case, could not then be very far. It is therefore neither impossible nor improbable that the *rams*, and *he goats*, which were with Laban's sons, might, in the night time wander back to the main body of the flock, as it is often the case with both *rams* and *he goats*, in *rutting-time*, to stray a great distance from the flock to meet with ewes, and she-goats. When these came back, it was natural for the ewes, which had been accustomed with seeing their figures in the troughs of water before, when they were rutting, to prefer the *speckled rams* and *he-goats* before the others. Jacob had sagacity enough to manage the matters so as that the feeble of the flock were carefully kept by themselves, and that none of the weaker sort were permitted to come near the speckled rams and he-goats.—This is more probable than that the force of imagination produced the effect that is recorded concerning the increase of Jacob's flocks. It is much more natural to suppose, that Jacob made use of the parti-coloured rods to form the images of *rams* and *he-goats*, and placed them in the water-troughs, where the flocks had the most agreeable sensations, by having their thirst quenched, that when the speckled rams came again in their way, they might give the preference to them, in opposition to others. Jacob, who had been fourteen years a shepherd before this time, could not be ignorant, that, though Laban separated the flocks at *three days journey distance*, according to the method of feeding, that in the spring, when the ewes were rutting, or in *the autumn*, the rams



would soon find their way to them, unless restrained, and in one night would make a longer journey, than in three days, along with the rest of the flocks. Laban's sons, who were not so well acquainted with the nature of sheep as Jacob, might not watch so carefully as to keep the rams from wandering in the night time, and so might give an opportunity for their straying in the evening, and accomplishing Jacob's design. The setting the parti-coloured rods in the troughs, was a method to engage the senses of the ewes, which, finding that they always found water when they saw the *rods*, would, in a short time, become familiar and pleased with the appearance; which would soon give them a *sensual bias* to *rams* of the same hue and colour. Whatever may be in the force of imagination, it does not appear credible, that it was competent for this effect, and if once divine Providence be called in to work, it is more likely that it would work by the instrumentality of the *instinct of the rams*, than by the *force of the imagination of the ewes*. All the objection that can be made to this opinion is, that Laban might consider the agreement as void and null, when he found that the speckled rams came from the one flock to the other. But as this was no part of the bargain, that Jacob should hinder the rams, if they came from the one flock to the other, seeing they were under the custody of Laban's sons, there could no blame be fixed upon Jacob. What confirms this opinion, are the *words of Jacob*, and the *angel of God*, ver. 10, 11. of chap. xxxi—*And it came to pass at the time that the cattle were rutting, that I lifted up mine eyes and saw in a dream,*  
*and*

and behold the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ring-straked, speckled, and grizzled. And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: and I said, here am I: And he said, lift up thine eyes and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ring-straked, speckled and grizzled, for I have seen all that Laban doth unto thee. The only thing that Jacob intended by the rods seems to have been to attract the senses of the best of the cattle, and prepare them for receiving the speckled rams, rather than others; for he did not set the rods before the feeble cattle. In this appears the whole of Jacob's art, on this occasion. He never meant that the rods should varigate the colour of the sheep, by the force of imagination, but wanted that, by engaging the animal feelings or the stronger cattle to the *parti-coloured* males, to have a breed of the best, for his wages. That which made the cattle speckled, and ring-straked was the rams, which *instinct* and *Providence*, brought to the flocks. It is certain, that Providence had a special hand in the whole of this transaction, for it was even remarkable that all the strong cattle brought forth *parti-coloured* young; for it does not always happen according to nature, that *speckled rams* and *ewes* produce speckled lambs.

The good fortune and success of Jacob soon became an object of envy to Laban and his sons; upon this his wages were changed by Laban ten times. This must have happened by Laban changing the flocks twice in the year; for in those countries the sheep had young twice in the year, in *spring* and in *autumn*;—But as Laban was not in the secret of Jacob's proceedings, all that he did had no effect.

Jacob pursued his course, and the ordinary success attended him till he turned very rich, and then he thought of returning to Canaan with his family, and all his substance that Providence had bestowed upon him. This was an undertaking of great difficulty and attended *with some danger*. Jacob knew that Laban was not likely to let him away voluntarily, and would, probably, use force in hindering him from returning to his father's house, and his own country; he therefore, after consulting with his wives and family, set off privately, when Laban was sheering his sheep. It was not an easy task to carry off privately such a multitude of children, servants, and cattle as now belonged to our patriarch, without alarming some of those who were connected or concerned with Laban; it happened, however, that Jacob had passed the Euphrates, with all that he had, and was going towards mount Gilead before Laban had notice of his departure. By this time Jacob had gained a march of three days, and was gone seven days journey, before Laban overtook him; he was by this time at mount Gilead, when Laban came up with him. The intention of this pursuit was to bring Jacob back, with all that he had, but Providence ordered it otherwise. The Lord, who had taken Jacob under his care, preserved him from the violence which Laban intended against him. Laban confesses *that God spake to him, and commanded him to speak to Jacob neither good nor evil*, otherwise he came with an intention to do him real hurt. There was no merit in this conduct of Laban, for he would have done mischief if he could; he was only afraid that the Lord would  
punish



punish him, and on that account restrained himself from the violence he intended. It is something remarkable that men of idolatrous dispositions and practices, should have, in those times, known the signatures of the divine presence, or have regarded them at all. This must be accounted for from the divine energy, that attended those manifestations of the divine presence, which impressed the minds of those to whom the discovery was made. Whether the Lord spake to Laban in a dream, or in some other manner of vision, Moses does not inform us, but, it is certain, that he spake in such a manner as made that Syrian understand, that it was the God of Abraham and Isaac.

An altercation, on this occasion, ensued between the father-in-law and his son, when some reciprocal reproaches passed between them, concerning their behaviour towards one another. Laban, when he found that he could not counteract Providence, complained that Jacob had stolen away before he knew, and had prevented him from sending him off with *music*, and *mirth*, and the *ordinary signs of festivity* that were used on such occasions;—and Jacob vindicated his behaviour and conduct, by assuring Laban that he took the measures he had done, from an apprehension that he would have taken his daughters by force from him. Laban knew that what Jacob said was true, and was not able to gainsay it; but, to bring himself fairly off, he charged Jacob with stealing his Gods. This was what Jacob was ignorant of, and therefore he replied with some warmth, that, with whomsoever these gods were found, he would give his consent that they should not live.

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He permitted Laban to search all his stuff, which was done with great accuracy, and strictness; but Rachel, Laban's daughter, put a trick upon her father; she had stolen his Teraphim, which were something like the household gods of the Romans \*,  
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\* *Teraphim* is a plural word, and signifies a collection of images. It comes from the word *Teraph*, which signifies *filthiness*, because all idols are an abomination to the Lord. Teraphim were images made under certain constellations, which were consulted in things *doubtful*, or *future*, from a supposition that they had a power, by some heavenly influence, to reveal secrets: They are in form like puppets, made of wax, such as the ancient wizzards used, or like some small *images* or *crucifixes* which papists make use of. It is the opinion of Gregory, upon the Assyrian Monarchy, that they were the heads of male infants, made and erected under the influence of some planet under which some spirit ruled, whose name was engraven upon a thin plate, and placed with great ceremony under each of their heads. After this apparatus was finished, lamps were lighted and burnt before the Teraphim; then, after some exorcisms, the heads were expected to speak, and give responses. The same writer observes, that the story which is told concerning the famous Roger Bacon, took its rise from some experiments of this sort. *Assyrian Monarchy*, p. 199.

Roger Bacon was a person of so much good sense, that one can hardly believe that he was so weak as to pretend to any such thing, as is alleged concerning him. His genius for science, and especially chymistry, was so surprising to that ignorant age, that they looked upon him in the same light as the Scots did Mr Michael Scot, namely, of one that had commerce with the devil. That Teraphim were ima-

—certain images of men, engraven upon bras, or molten figures of angels, or such like things. These Rachel had concealed in her stuff, and sat upon them. When Laban came to her tent she permitted him to search all, but where she was sitting, and pretended that the custom of women was upon her, so that she could not rise; upon this he excused her, and went away. Jacob now had occasion to be angry, and gave some vent to his wrath; he chid with Laban, and said to him, What is my trespass? What is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued me? Whereas, thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household? Set it here before thy brethren, and my brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. “These twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn in pieces I brought not unto thee, I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was,—in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and

ges of men, or sometimes of one man, appears plain from 1 Sam. xix. 13. There Michal, the daughter of Saul, is said to have taken Teraphim, and placed in the bed instead of David, her husband, which makes it exceedingly plain that it was something in the form of a man, otherwise there could have been no deception in the case. The text says, there was an image, or Teraphim, in the bed.



and thou has changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty : God hath seen my affliction, and the labour of mine hands, and rebuked thee yesternight." This speech of Jacob was so just, true, and so animated, that it confused Laban and put him to silence. He knew the justness of the charge, and could make no reply ; He thereof dropt the subject, and proposed to enter into a covenant with Jacob.

The vision Which Laban had met with the night before, had now informed him that Jacob was a favourite of heaven, and, that it was dangerous to differ with him, or oppose him. It was this that made him propose a covenant, which otherwise he never intended. The making of covenants, were performed by the ancients sometime by feasting, or breaking of bread, at other times by killing animals and cutting the parts asunder, and passing between them, signifying, that the party that broke the covenant deserved to die. Hence in scripture it is called a cutting a *berith*, which we, very improperly, render covenant on almost all occasions. This agreement, between Laban and Jacob, was solemnized by the ceremony of building an altar, in form of a round table, upon which they first offered sacrifices, and then did eat bread together with all their party. This *pillar*, *heap*, or *altar*, or what you please to call it, was intended for a memorial of the agreement now made between Jacob and Laban. Each of them gave it a name, according to the intention and meaning of the agreement. Laban called

called it *Jegar Sahadutha*, but Jacob called it *Galeed*. that is, the heap of witness. It was also called *Mispeth*, which signifies a watch-tower, meaning, that the God before whom they made that covenant would be the guarantee of that treaty, and punish the party who brake it.

The covenant made between Jacob and Laban was ratified by an oath. Laban swore by the *God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their fathers*, but Jacob swore by the fear of his father *Isaac*. The oath which Jacob swore, though it was intended to confirm the same thing with that which Laban entered into, yet appears different in several particulars. The Syrian swears by the *God of Abraham, and Nahor*, and adds, *the God of their fathers*. It is exceedingly plain, from scripture, that all their fathers before Terah were idolaters, and therefore, Laban must have taken the *Affyrian and Chaldean's Deity* into his form of oath, otherwise he would have gone no farther back than the time that his fathers became worshipers of the true God. What confirms this opinion concerning Laban's theology is, the great noise he made concerning his *Teraphim*, which he calls (*Elohe*) *his Gods*. There is no reason to suppose that Laban has any other meaning by *Elohe*, when he is swearing, than when he was charging Jacob for stealing his *elohe*, Jacob seems to have perceived that Laban and he had different meanings by the plural word *elohe*, and would therefore not make use of it in this oath, and therefore, he takes a singular word, which, though it is no express name of the Deity, yet, by a sort of a figure of speech, wherein the effect is

put for *the efficient*, or the act for the object, the name of the Deity is signified. The great object of Isaac's fear was *Jehovah*, which he took care not to mention on this occasion, lest it should have been profaned by some Syrian interpretation in the stile of Laban. It is not very plain that the name *Jehovah* was known amongst the Syrians, at this time; they seem rather to have made use of *Elohim only*, because it was a word of a plural signification, and suited their ideas of *polytheism*. It does not appear that in all the conversations that Jacob had in Padanaram, that ever he made use of the word *Jehovah* till he was fairly out of it, except once, though it might be used in his family, it is not found recorded in any of his speeches, except in the 30th verse of the xxxth chapter: when he is speaking concerning the prosperity of Laban on his account, he says, *that Jehovah had blessed Laban since his coming*. And this seems to have been used, on account of Laban's mentioning that *name*, in the *same sense*, in the 27th verse.

When the ceremonies of this covenant was over Jacob and Laban parted; Jacob proceeded on his journey, and Laban and his company returned to Padanaram. Jacob was scarcely well freed from one embarrassment when another speedily followed:—He had to pass near the possessions of his brother Esau; and, being conscious that his brother had some reason to remember him, he was afraid that it would not be for good; he therefore began to think of a scheme to extricate himself out of this embarrassment.—Jacob seldom wanted expedients, for he was not only favoured by Providence, but had a sort of natural



tural forcast, and perceived, by comparing circumstances, what would really happen. While he was ruminating how he was to manage his brother Esau, he was met by a host of angels, which had formed a sort of encampment in a place, which afterwards received its name from this transaction\*.

How jacob knew that they were angels, or how angels could render themselves visible, has been considered in some measure already. There were, undoubtedly, some striking marks about them, that distinguished them from all human creatures, and shewed that they were, in the language of Jacob, *the host of God*. It is very probable that the *great angel Jehovah*, was upon the head of them, in the character in which he was known to the patriarchs, which made Jacob understand whose host they were. Some of the Jewish writers are of opinion, that the two hosts were two companies of angels, the one the angels that had the charge of Padanaram, and the others those that were the keepers of Canaan; that the one escorted jacob safely out of Syria, and committed him to a new guard as soon as he entered

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Canaan

\* This place was situated between *mount Gilead*, and the *river Jabbok*, and not far from the banks of the latter, and very near to the confines of *Gad* and *the half tribe of Manassah*, which was on the other side of Jordan. It was afterwards a place of great strength, and, on that account, was chosen for the royal seat of *Ishbosheth, Saul's son*, when he made war against *David*, and for a retiring place to David, when he fled from his son Absalom. It is called *Mahanaim*, because of the encampment of the angels, and Jacob's company in that place. *Mahanaim* signifies *two hosts* or *armies* in a camp.

Canaan. Though this opinion is not very certain, it is not unpleasant; a brigade of such faithful servants of God will always be good company to good men, whether they be visible or invisible. There is more safety under their protection than from many legions of armed men; and what is still more, they cost no expence, and yet never complain. A nation would be much better under the government of a company of angels than under the power of a standing army; they would never be off their guard, and would cost the kingdom nothing, except what would be for their advantage. For, as whimsical as this thought may appear to some, there is more in it than some people are aware of. It is an undoubted truth, that if good angels are not sent to minister to people, the Lord will send evil angels among them, as he did of old among the rebellious Israelites. There is a fine poem, written by *Parnel*, called the *Hermit*, which, though it is drest up in the form of a fable, carries more truth in it than most of people apprehend. There are many hypocrites, and wicked persons, that when they are forming designs of iniquity and mischief against others, that receive an invisible blow from some of these ministering spirits.

One would have thought that after Jacob saw under whose protection he was, he would not have been afraid of his brother Esau, yet we find his fears returned upon him, and he wanted to try all means where he thought there might be safety. He, therefore, formed a plan the best that possibly could have been thought on. The method he devised was to send messengers to discover the disposi-  
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on of his brother, who returned with the unwelcome news of Esau's approach with four hundred men. This alarmed him greatly, for he was afraid that he was coming to take revenge upon him for defrauding him of the blessing; and an army of four hundred men did look as if he was coming upon no friendly errand. Jacob's sagacity did not on this occasion forsake him, and though he was in great fear, it only roused his faculties, and made him use all his invention. He divided the people, and the flocks and herds that were with him into two bands, with a design that if Esau should attack the one, the other might have time to escape, and then betook himself to his prayers, an institution that never fails of success, when rightly observed. On this occasion he put the Lord in mind of his promise, and said, 'O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Jacob, Jehovah, who saidst to me, return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal with thee. I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewn to thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear lest he come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.' Having finished his prayer, he lodged where he was all that night. This is a piece of oratory in prayer seldom to be met with; there is not one in all the liturgy like it;



like it, for variety of expression, choice of sentiment, and energy of stile. The solemnity of the address, the humility of the speaker, the propriety of the request, and the foundation of the prayer are admirable. The substance of this prayer is chiefly an acknowledgment of the mercies of God, in promising to do him good, and there is only one petition in the whole: *Deliver me, I pray thee—Thou hast said I will surely do thee good.* If Jacob had sat down to compose a prayer for a year, he could not have formed one more suitable for the occasion. It is easy to perceive that it came from his heart; it is not like some of those *dry forms* that are *forged in the closets of bishops*, or composed by act of parliament, for an occasional fast. How different is the prayer of the patriarch from that formed by the bishops for the last general fast. In a prayer for their enemies, they pray *that the Americans may return to their duty, and make themselves worthy of the divine pardon and forgiveness.* Jacob says, *I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and all the truth, which thou hast shewn unto thy servant.* Now, suppose the Americans should, according to the tenure of the bishops' prayer, be brought to a sense of their gratitude, for the many blessings of Providence preserved to them by the indulgent protection of these kingdoms, do their *graces and lordships* imagine, that they would be more worthy of pardon and forgiveness than the patriarch Jacob? The humble patriarch considered himself unworthy of the least of God's mercies, and seems firmly to have believed, that where *mercy took place* all human worth was set aside. But, that the reader

der may judge fairly concerning the prayer of the patriarch, and that of the bishops, he will find them in the notes, at the foot of the page ‡.

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‡ *Vai-omer, Jacob, Elobe Abi Abraham, u Elobe Abi Isaac, Jehovah ha-omer Elai, Shub le-aretza lencolauitcka veait-tiba immak Katneti micol kakafidm, u-micol haemet After Asbith Eth-abadeka, ci be makoli Abareti Etb bajoreeden haxe ve atta hajiti li sbene makanoth, haxe leni na mijad atti mijad Esau Ci-jareh anoci othi Pen Zabo ve bikkani em aibanini. Ve-atta amarti hetib Eytib immak; ve-sbanti eth Saraka Cebol hajom asher lo jis-apher meroh.*

And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham! and God of my father Isaac, Jehovah, which saidst unto me, return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal with thee. I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou has shewed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. So far Jacob.—Let us hear the Bishops'.

*A PRAYER for our Enemies*

"O blessed Lord, who hast commanded us, by thy beloved son, to love our enemies, and extend our charity in praying even for those who despitefully use us, give grace, we beseech thee, to our unhappy subjects in America, that, seeing and confessing the error of their ways, and having a due sense of their ingratitude for the many blessings of thy providence, preserved to them, by the indulgent care and protection of these kingdoms, they may again return to their

A nation is truly to be pitied when they are under the direction of such blind guides, who are so ignorant of the gospel of God, as to pray for pardon upon the footing of human worthiness. In the days of Jacob, believers would have been ashamed of such prayers.—However great and learned men our *bishops* are, they are very poor divines.

their *duty*, and make themselves worthy of thy pardon and forgiveness: grant us, in the mean time, strength and courage to withstand them, (but charity to forgive and unite them) to shew willingness to receive them again, as friends and brethren, upon *just* and *reasonable* terms, and to treat them with *mercy*, and *kindness*, for the sake of thy son Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

Alas! how poorly does the bishops pray, when compared with the Patriarch! They have not the smallest idea of divine mercy, except what depends upon human worth, The *poor AMERICAN REBELS* must render themselves *worthy* of the *pardon* and the *forgiveness of sin*, otherwise, Lord have mercy on them. *Rebels as they are*, there are *other rebels* against God besides them.—Even the bishops have reason to fear, if mercy be obtained by worthiness, they will be weighed in the balance and found wanting.—THE INDULGENT CARE OF PROVIDENCE has done as much for them as ever Britain did for the Americans, and yet they have made but an indifferent return to the author of their mercies. While men are living in luxury and voluptuousness, it becomes them ill to be talking of worthiness, to recommend others to the mercy of God. *God will be just, when he justifies the ungodly* if the whole bench of bishops had said to the contrary: and, *if ever they be saved*, it must be as poor sinners, and not as men of worth. There is more good sense, as well as true religion, in Jacob's prayer



Jacob rested for one night, after having committed his cause to God, and settled his scheme with regard to meeting his brother Esau. Jacob appears to have had an extensive knowledge of the human heart, and of the passions; he addressed his brother in the only way that could most pacify an angry man. Solomon tells us, that a man's gift makes way for him: Jacob found this proverb true, and seems to have understood it before. Two hundred she-goats, and twenty he-goats,—two hundred ewes and twenty rams,—thirty milch camels with their colts,—forty kine, and ten bulls,—twenty she-asses, and ten foals, made an handsome present. And being divided and sent in so many separate droves, would appear still greater than they were. —There was a great deal of art in this arrangement. Jacob takes down Esau's indignation as if it were piece-meal, first softens him a little with a present of 200 goats,—then as many sheep,—

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prayer, than the whole collation that was prepared for the late general fast. Jacob confessed his unworthiness *acknowledged the goodness of God, trusted in his mercy, and prayed for the accomplishment of his promises.* Well hath Isaiah spoken of their GRACES and LORDSHIPS:—"His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant: they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are all greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant."—Isa. liv. 10.

next a herd of kine,—then milch camels,—and last of asses. What covetous man could stand against all these? They were sufficient to make a man's fortune, though he had had no more. And it was not improbable that Esau might imagine, that a man that could afford to give such a present, might also have 600 men against his four hundred bringing up the rear. Not only the present which Jacob sent, but the address of all the drivers was enough to soften a proud man. At every interrogation whose cattle are these? the answer was ready, and the same;—They are a present from thy servant Jacob, to MY LORD ESAU. These were bewitching words, and being so often repeated, fascinated Esau; they disarmed him of all his resentment, and he could resist no longer.—But we must draw down the curtain a little, and open a new scene before we come to the interview between Jacob and Esau his brother. Jacob having put all his drove in order, settled their distance, and disposed their ranks, and he himself lodged all night with his wives and children. In the middle of the night he conveyed his wives, children, and the rest of his servants over the brook Jabbok. This is a small river which flows from mount Gilead, and runs into the sea of Galilee, and is in scripture called a brook. It was near the banks of this river that Jacob met with a wonderful and gracious adventure.—After he had conveyed his family and substance over this brook, he himself stayed a little behind, perhaps to perform his personal devotion, and to commend himself and family to God, at a time when he expected to meet with danger. It

was

was here that he met with a man that wrestled with him, and whom he knew, by certain signatures, to be *Elohim*, for he says that he had seen the face of *God* or *Elohim*. This person seems to have had the appearance and properties of a man; for he *wrestled* with Jacob, and was seen by him. In this appearance there was something declarative of God; this could be no other than that only begotten, who is in *Jehovah*, and makes *Elohim* known to mortals. This wrestling was only to try Jacob; for it is certain, that this *divine man* could easily have overcome Jacob, when, by a single touch he disjoined his thigh.

It appears plain, that this person had the properties of a man, for he both was seen and felt by Jacob; he also conversed with him, and asked him questions. There are many disputes concerning the reasons of this wrestling; why an angel should have met Jacob, and put him in fear of his life; but there is one probable reason, and is of the same nature with that which made the Lord seek to kill Moses in the inn. Jacob had been exceedingly solicitous about preserving himself and family from the hand of his brother Esau, and sent him very liberal presents to avert his anger, but though he had vowed to give the tenth of all that he had unto the Lord, yet he had not thought upon his promise. What confirms this sentiment, is the commandment that he received from the Lord, in chap. xxxv:—*To go to Bethel and build an altar to God who appeared to him, when he fled from the face of Esau.* It is plain that the Almighty intended, by his wrestling, to give Jacob some correction, and



that he stood sensibly corrected by this man; for the prophet tells us *that he wept and made supplications, and had power over the angel thereby, and prevailed: that he found him at Bethel, and there he spake with Israel.* This correction was intended for Jacob's good and advantage; the gracious hand that corrected him gave him strength to prevail, and thereby strengthened his persuasion, that as he had now as a prince, prevailed with God, he should not fall before his brother Esau.

Jacob, after that he discovered that the man that strained his thigh was a divine person, he then cleaves faster to him, and refuses to let him go till he had received his blessing. We are not to suppose that Jacob was really able by bodily strength to detain this man; but the prophet gives the reason;—*he wept and made supplication*, and at last he blessed him. There is frequently a wonderful connection of means to bring about divine purposes and promises. The end of this adventure was to confirm Jacob's faith in the promise of God, but in it were contained bodily fear, heavenly correction, a divine manifestation, and a special blessing. The Providence of God towards his own people may truly be called the drama of mercy, in which, although there may be exhibited various scenes of distress, grievous trials, and afflictions, enlargements, and entanglements, yet, when all the scenes are with-drawn, and the curtain removed, it will plainly appear *that all things have wrought together for good to those that fear God.*

This divine person gave Jacob a new name on this occasion, and called him *Israel*, which signifies  
one

*one that hath seen God, and prevailed with him as a prince* \*. In our version of the Pentateuch it is said, that the name of the patriarch should be called no more Jacob, but Israel. According to this reading, the words of the angel would not be true; but, according to the Hebrew text, it reads *thy name shall not be called Jacob, but also Israel*. Jacob's name was continued to him long after this transaction; but his posterity received their name from him on account of this declaration of the angel. This blessing related more to his posterity than to himself, as is plain from the words of the prophet Hosea, chap. xii. 3. He found him at Bethel, and there he spoke with us; namely, the posterity of Jacob, who received the name of Israel, from this transaction. It is manifest that this angel was no created one, for Jacob calls him God, and prays unto him,—offers up earnest supplications unto him, which is not lawful to do to any, except to God.

How Jacob knew this angel to be a divine person I have already hinted; but there are three ways by

\* The writers of Hebrew lexicons, and some critics, affirm, that the word or name *Israel* is derived from *Sarah*, which signifies to *behave as a prince*, and *El*, which is a name of the Almighty, and so they say that it signifies a *prince of God*. But it appears more probable, that it is derived from *Ish* a man, *ra* seeing, and *Sarah* & *El*, a man *seeing and having power with God*. So this name comprehends *what he saw, what he did, and what he was*. By taking in to the composition of the name *Israel* letters out of all these four words Moses has comprehended the whole signification of them all, in one name.

by which he might know him.—The first is from the majesty of his appearance, and the sympathetic awe that his presence had upon his mind ; secondly, from his words, in promising him a blessing to his posterity in the name of Israel : and thirdly, from the touch which he gave the sinew which shrank, which no human creature could have so affected with a touch as this person did. The Jews call this the sinew of forgetfulness, because it forgot in a manner its office, and made Jacob halt. It is generally thought that this was one of those ligaments that unite the *os femoris*, or thigh-bone, with the *acetabulum*, or huckle-bone, or what may be called the pan, or socket, in which the joint moves. The words *gid nasha*, signify a *sinew loose in the joint*, which the Latins render *nervus luxatus*, but very improperly. Whatever part of the thigh this was in, it is plain that it was but a temporary strain, or wrench ; for we soon find Jacob recovered of it, and traveling with the rest. This accident, however, was the foundation of an institution among the Jews, which they still observe, they eat not of the sinew which shrank to this day \*. That  
pain

\* By the Hebrew canons, they were bound to abstain from eating this sinew, both within the land of Israel and without it, in common meals, as unholy, in cattle and in beasts ; in the right thigh of the beast, and in the left, but not in fowls, because they have no hollow in their thigh : *and whosoever eateth of the sinew that shrank the quantity of an olive, is beaten with forty stripes*. Therefore, the Jews are careful to cut away, out of all the beasts which they kill and eat, this sinew, with all the branches thereof underneath, and the muscle of the flesh wherein  
they



pain in the thigh, which we call the *sciatica*, or *bip gout*, the Jews call *gid hannaſſeh*, that is the ſinew which ſhrank. But it is not probable that this diſtemper was inflicted upon Jacob, otherwiſe he would not have ſo ſoon been able to travel along with the reſt, as we find him doing in a ſhort time after.

It appears ſomething ſtrange that this man that wreſtled with Jacob ſhould have inſiſted to go away at the breaking of the day. It would appear that he did not intend to gratify Jacob's curioſity with a broad diſplay of his countenance. It is probable, from this piece of hiſtory, that the heathens concluded that no ſpirits would ſtay any longer than till near break of day;—which is alſo a tradition among the country-people in almoſt all nations. Virgil makes *Anchiſes* depart from *Æneas* at day-break ‡, which ſhews that it was a tradition in his times

they are, for more aſſurance. Alſo, in their ſacrifices, when the members of the burnt offering are cut in pieces, and ſalted, then all the pieces were laid upon the altar, and they took out the ſinew that ſhrank, being upon the top of the altar, and threw it upon the aſhes which were upon the middle of the altar. *Ainſworth from Maimonides*.—Such trouble in killing of beaſts was certainly very troubleſome, and required more ſkill than falls to the ſhare of ordinary butchers.

‡ Jamque vale: torquet medios nox humida curſus;  
Et me ſevus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis.  
Dixerat: et tenues fugit cœu ſumus in auras.

VIRG. *Ænied.* v. 738.

*Which*

times that spirits, or shades, would not abide daylight. Probably this person did not intend that any should see him, except Jacob; and, for that reason, departed before it was light. Whatever were his reasons, we find that at day-breaking he blessed Jacob, and left him; he also refused to tell his name, which the patriarch would willingly have had from his own mouth; this curiosity he did not choose to gratify, because he had given him sufficient signatures of his character by what he had said and done. It was rather a little impertinent in Israel to ask such a question, but they had become familiar, and Jacob intended to use freedom. It was certainly a rash proceeding in the patriarch to ask the name of this man; for had the angel approved of the question, he would no doubt have given an answer to it.

The impression of this interview did not leave Jacob when the angel departed from him; he began to wonder at what had happened, and from the name he gave to the place, and the reason he assigned, it is easy to perceive that his mind was all in some agitation. He called *the name of the place Peniel, for he said I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.* This place was about forty miles from Jerusalem: In the days of Gideon there

*Which may be rendered thus:*

Now twilight comes and drives moist night away,  
And Sol unbars the golden gates of day;  
His neighing couriers breathe forth beams of light,  
Too glaring for the view of shades of night;  
Farewell, he said: and into air he flies,  
And, like a vapour, vanished from mine eyes.

there was a city in this place, and a tower, which this judge demolished, for the inhabitants refusing to give bread to his army when he was pursuing Zeba and Zalmunna, the princes of Midian. Jacob had more in his view, when he says he had seen *the face of God*, than most of our commentators have thought of.—By this, he means the same thing that the Psalmist does by *the face of Jehovah's anointed*, in the lxxxiv. Psalm.—*The Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ*, is justly entitled to this character, for it is through him, that sinful mortals can see the designs, or endure the presence of God. It is he that declares *Jehovah*, not only in his doctrine, but in his *person*, as our mediator; and what he says to Philip is universally true,—*He that hath seen the father*. From the most early ages of the world our blessed Lord and Saviour took pleasure to make *Jehovah* known to mankind. This the wise man calls playing, when speaking of wisdom, he says, *that she played in the habitable parts of the earth; and her delights were with the sons of men*. If by wisdom be understood *Christ*, who is the wisdom of God, then those appearances which he made *before his coming in the flesh*, may be considered as a sort of holy diversion, in which he took pleasure in the shadow of flesh, to communicate divine feelings to the souls of his beloved ones. Like an heavenly guardian he watched over his people invisibly, as it were *in cog*, without the reach of sense, and after he had fulfilled his office for the time, before he went away came from behind the curtain of insensibility, and made himself sensibly known. This the scripture calls *the Messiah's play*, or, *our Redeemer's*



*diversion, and delight.* It is an idea taken from the practice and office of nurses and guardians of little children, who, when they permit them to run through the circle of their little pranks by themselves, are pleased to see them, and then come in view, either to approve their conduct, or to rectify their misbehaviour. This is a very pleasing sentiment. How agreeable the thought, to be assured that our dear and merciful Saviour has, from the beginning, and still continues to watch over his people, and takes more pleasure in attending them, than any parent or nurse can take in watching over their little children? This is not an abstract metaphysical notion, but a practical thought; for though our Lord does not openly for the present, burst into the view of our senses, yet he is as near us as if we saw him. And it is not at all to be questioned, but that those that are habitually accustomed to review his character in their minds, according to the light of divine revelation, will be as sensible of his presence, and see him with the eyes of their understanding as clearly as they see a visible object with their bodily eyes. It is not improbable that holy persons who have their senses *in subordination to their souls*, may so *spiritualize them*, as even to be able to discern spiritual objects, in some measure, sensibly. We are, in general, such strangers to our own minds, and the power they may have over the body, by spiritual habits and exercises, that we consider every thing to be impossible, that we have not experienced; whereas our real want of such experience proceeds from our not practising the means that are appointed to obtain it. Our senses  
may

may be improved to such a degree, as to perform what some would call a miracle; the roving tribes of those called, savages in *North America*, have improved their senses to such a *degree*, by habit and exercise, that, with their eyes, they can discern upon the grass the foot tracks of their enemies, and determine how long it is since they have passed with great exactness. They will smell, at many miles distance, the huts of their foes, and tell, to a nearness, how far distant they are; they will hear at a good distance the lowest whisper, among trees or bushes, and put themselves in a posture of defence in an instant. This appears totally incredible, provided it were not confirmed by incontestable authority. No Europeans, nor Easterns, who live in luxury, are capable of doing these things. And perhaps the reason why they oftentimes see those powers that are so invisible to us, is, that their sight is so *penetrating*, as to be able to perceive the *airial bodies*, with which those powers are cloathed. We have no reason to believe that powers naturally invisible, can be seen by any human sight, unless they are cloathed in some kind of matter; but we are totally uncertain, if any creatures are formed in this manner.—When angels *good* or *bad* are seen, they become visible in some material vehicles, and, perhaps, these vehicles are as natural to them, as their being and existence. It only requires a degree of vision equal to the pureness of the object that is to be seen, to discern them.

Jacob and the other patriarchs that lived in tents, and enjoyed the open air, would be much like those tribes that have been now mentioned; their senses

would be a thousand times more accute, than ours, who live in *houses, towns*, and in *luxury* can possibly conceive. Many things invisible to us, in this case, would be visible to them, and would only require the presence of the objects to make them visible. What confirms this idea that has just now been suggested, is, that visions were generally made to men before they were *very old*, whereas revelation by dreams were given to old men. To this *the apostle Peter* alludes, when he says, *the young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams* \*.——Whatever may be in these things, (for I only give them as things probable) one thing is certain, that our senses may be made more subservient to the good of our souls than they generally are.

We must now return and consider the interview between Jacob and Esau. After having sent a present to Esau, before all other things, he placed the rest of his family in that order, in which they stood in his affections.—He set the hand-maids and their children formost, next to the danger he apprehended, next to them Leah, and her children,—and farthest from the danger he placed *Rachel* and *Joseph* in the rear. There plainly appears a sort of selfish partiality in this arrangement, and distribution of Jacob's family. All the children that belonged to Jacob, were his own flesh and blood, and yet it seems, that he loved some of them better than the others. Rachel was the object of his first love, and Joseph her only son, and his youngest child, and, perhaps they were the most unfit to make resistance, or to effect their escape, and, for this reason, he left them  
in

\* Acts ii. 17.



in the rear. It was, however, an hard case, and a good man could not well tell what he would have done in such a situation.—But Jacob went foremost himself; if there were any danger, he intended it should light first upon him. This was heroic, and noble; to bear the first attack of what he himself was the cause, was no more also than reasonable.—Matters turned out better than he had reason to expect; his brother was mild, brotherly, and kind. There is not one of a thousand would have behaved so well; he overlooked all former injuries, and behaved like a brother. Though Esau was angry when he conceived himself injured, he does not appear to have been implacable, and it is but reasonable to give him credit for this part of his conduct. David once intended to commit murder, for a far less offence than Jacob had given Esau, in the way that Esau understood it; he would have slain Nabal, and all his family, had not the prudence of Abigail, the wife of Nabal, prevented him.

Jacob appears to have been a man of address, and knew how to make the best use of his good breeding.—When he approached Esau, he bowed *seven times*, at some distance, and shewed both his politeness, and his humility. It is probable some of this address was forced, and did not all proceed from the heart; where there is too much courtesy it is rare to find perfect sincerity. It appears to have given Esau pain to see so many people cringing and bowing to him; he made all the haste he could to prevent it. He ran and met Jacob, and kissed him, to shew that he had forgiven him. There was more in this than *a thousand conges*;  
this

this was coming to the point at once, and in effect telling his brother that he had nothing to fear, all was forgotten, and what he dreaded so much should never more be mentioned. Had Esau always behaved himself as well as on this occasion, he ought to have had both the *birthright* and the  *blessing*. In a word, he behaved like a *prince*,—yea, *like a brother*. After the first fally of affection was over, and mutual salutations given, Esau began to interrogate Jacob concerning the droves he had met, and received for return, that they were sent to find grace in his sight. It is not easy to account for this sort of expression. If there were no guilt, there was no occasion for paying so dear for a favour; Jacob was still afraid that Esau retained some grudge, and that the sparks of revenge might kindle again before he and his brother should part. He wanted therefore to quench it altogether, and he knew that humility and a good present were the most likely means to accomplish this; he therefore pressed him with the present, and urged him earnestly to accept of it. Esau, on this occasion, increased in his civility, and spoke like a real friend. “ I have  
 “ enough : my brother keep that thou hast to thy-  
 “ self.” Could any thing be more discreet? Could any words be more affectionate? *My brother*, keep that thou hast to thyself, I have enough : Esau did not speak as a man that had any ill design against Jacob, or like one that was covetous. He was content with what he had. When a present is urged with great earnestness, and offered out of real respect, a refusal is generally looked upon as the greatest affront. Esau at last accepted of his  
 brother's

brother's gift, and did not do any one thing to disoblige him.

Jacob seems to hint that Esau had some reason to be displeased with him; for he says that he had seen his face as the face of God, because he was pleased with him. This is as much as to say that the whole was a work of Providence, and directed by God; for Jacob had offended his brother, and might have suffered severely, had not God disposed Esau to forgiveness, and made him overlook the injury that his brother had done him. It is great wisdom to read in the behaviour of instruments the providence of God towards ourselves. *The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and, as rivers of water, he turneth it whethersoever he pleaseth.* Esau was managed by the direction of God, and made to behave favourably to his brother by a wise over-ruling Providence. It argues always a true sense of religion when men consider all their deliverances as from God, whatever the second causes may be. Jacob seems to have wearied of his brother's company, and speaks as if he wished him gone; the prince of Seir offered him his company to go along with him, his servants to assist him, but he made an apology, and wanted to excuse himself. The children were *tender*, the flocks and herds *with young*, hard driving would *fatigue the one, and kill the other*. In a word, Jacob wanted to be free from his brother's company; and, by his apologies, shews that he did not care how soon he was gone. Esau at last returned to Seir, and Jacob came to Succoth. Jacob, after he came to Succoth, which signifies *booths*, and received its name from Jacob making booths for his cat-



tle in this place, proceeded to Shechem, where he arrived safe and sound, at a city in that place of the country \*, bearing the same name. It was here that he bought a parcel of a field for an hundred pieces of money. Some say a hundred lambs, and if the value of the piece of money be no more than the sixth part of a common penny, an hundred lambs were of more value than an hundred pieces of such money. Those who have determined the value of this money, appear not to have understood much about it; for it would be but a small parcel of land that an hundred and three or four of our English pence would purchase; which, according to Druseus, is the amount of this sum. It does not appear, from the Hebrew, whether it was silver or gold: if it was the latter it would be of more value, but still would make but a small purchase. It seems to have been a coin, with the image of a lamb inscribed upon it, something like the manner

\* Our translation renders the words *Va jabo Jacob Shalem* fair Shechem,—and Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem. Now, it is not found in Scripture that there was any city of that name near Shechem. The translators have fallen into this mistake, by not observing the true import of the word *Shalem*, which signifies *in peace*, or *safe*, and should be read as an adjective in this place. The text reads thus: *And Jacob came safe, or in safety, to the city Shechem*, which is in the land of Canaan. This Shechem was a city belonging to the ten tribes. It was at this place that Abimelech, the bastard son of Gideon, set fire to a tower, and destroyed about a thousand men and women, in the days of the Judges. *Judg. ix. 49.*—Such inaccuracies in our version are ready to mislead the reader.

ner in which angels were inscribed upon the piece of gold which goes by that name. In those parts, as flocks and herds were the most valuable commodities, it was most natural to inscribe upon their money the image of what they valued most. There might be something emblematical in this: Jacob was now making a purchase of some property in Canaan, and he paid the price of a lamb either in kind, or in figure. This might be a figure of the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, and by the price of whole blood the heavenly Canaan is obtained for the people of God. What confirms this sentiment is, that Jacob built an altar after this, and called it, *El-Elohe-Israel*,—*GOD, the God of Israel*. This altar was, no doubt, for the sake of offering sacrifices, which, in those times, always pointed out the atonement of Christ, and the offering that he was to make in the fulness of time. It was no wonder that Jacob made his purchase with such a price, when he was living with his eye upon the promise that was made to his fathers, *Abraham* and *Isaac*. He would naturally be fond of such emblems, as kept up in his remembrance the grand object of his hope.

Jacob was not long in Canaan before he met with a very offensive adventure in his own family. He had only one daughter, who, instead of being prudent and wise in a strange place, began to make acquaintances, before she was rightly informed of the characters of the people of the land. Had Dinah been minding the business of her father's house, or keeping her father's flocks, as some of her mother's had done before her, she might have avoided

a misfortune, which both disgraced herself, and brought ruin upon a whole city. There is no preventing the vain dispositions of light women from making experiments very little to their honour. At first view, one would think there was very little harm in a young woman paying visits to the daughters of the land, to cultivate an acquaintance, and a good understanding, with her neighbours; but we must remember that the people of Canaan were now very much corrupted, and practised all sorts of lasciviousness. The women, as well as the men, were lost to all sense of modesty, and female virtue: they prostituted themselves in the most common and abominable manner, and could not be good companions for the children of the promise. Dinah, therefore, ought to have considered the character of the people she was going to keep company with, before she ventured so far from her father's house. She paid dearly for paying such a rash visit. Hamor's son, Shechem, like many young princes, was addicted to pleasure, and knew not what it was to restrain himself from gratifying his lusts. He *saw Dinah, he took her, and he humbled her*. It is generally said that he ravished her, but this does not appear from the account which Moses gives of the story. It would rather seem that he persuaded her, and that she consented, or at least made little or no resistance. Hamor loved her, and she seems also to have loved him, for we find her in his house after this transaction was over;—and we also find that he intended to make her his wife, and submitted to a very dangerous operation on her account. Shechem, if he committed an injury, endeavoured to repair it



it in the best manner he could, and the matter seems to have been entirely made up. The Shechemites were to submit to circumcision, and the son of Hamor was to have Dinah, with the consent of the sons of Israel. There seems to have been little truth in this agreement on either side: the sons of Jacob answered deceitfully, and never meant to fulfil the agreement. Hamor, by his speech to his people, seems to hint, that the reason why he entered into this bargain was, that the cattle and substance of the children of Israel would be their's. There seems to have been little sincerity on either hand, except in Jacob, who wanted to stand to the agreement.

The Shechemites were at last circumcised, according to agreement, and it might have been expected that all would have been well;—but, where there is no sincerity in covenants, it is not to be supposed that they will be strictly observed. Two of the sons of Jacob, and we may reasonably suppose a train of their domestics, attacked the city of Shechem, when the Shechemites were sore, and feverish, and slew every male therein \*. This was done unknown to Jacob, and affected him much. It was such an abuse of professed friendship as could not be vindicated: they not only *slew the males*, but took all their wives captives, and carried away their whole effects. This was proceeding beyond the authority of the promise, and taking possession of

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Canaan

\* It is generally supposed by the Jews that, upon the third day after the circumcision, the persons who were circumcised were, less or more, seized with a fever, and confined to their bed.

Canaan too soon. These boisterous patriarchs slew the innocent with the guilty, and dispatched the *in-offensive father* with the *offending son*. The sons of Jacob appear to have been exceedingly cruel and severe; in all their behaviour, they afford few instances of good character among them. Joseph is the only son of all the sons of Jacob that Moses mentions with any degree of applause. The patriarch Jacob seems not to have had much authority over his family; for they appear to have paid little regard to his commandments. We shall find afterwards that they intended to have murdered Joseph, and really sold him, contrary to the will of their father. This murder of the Shechemites was a cruel and abominable action; it was a breach of covenant, as well as a bloody murder, and is a perpetual stigma upon the sons of Jacob. But I shall drop this disagreeable subject, and conclude this discourse.

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## LECTURE XVII.

### *The Character of JOSEPH, &c.*

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GENESIS xxxvii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, &c.

*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.*

*And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.*

*And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.*

*And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed.*

*For behold we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold your sheaves stood round about, and made obedience to my sheaf.*

*And his brethren said unto him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? and they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words, &c.*

**A**MONG all the sons of Jacob there is none whose character has so few exceptions as Joseph. In his early years he discovered a sincere aversion at the iniquities and vices of his brethren. He reported their evil deeds to their father, for which  
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he procured their hatred, and in the conclusion felt it severely. There are none so cruel in their behaviour to others as those who are themselves wicked. Humanity, gentleness, and love, always proceed from a sound heart, and a good conscience.

Moses informs us of the reasons why Joseph's brethren hated him:—*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colours.—And when his brethren saw that his father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.—And Joseph dreamed a dream and told it to his brethren, and they hated him the more.* The sons of Israel seem to have hated Joseph more on account of their father's weakness, than any fault in their brother; his father's love, and his own dreams were, with regard to him, involuntary, and what he could not help, and he ought not to have been hated for the wickedness of an old man, and the free dispensations of God bestowed upon him.

There is one thing which affords some shadow of reason for their being offended at him; it is said, *he brought unto his father their evil report.*—But this was no foundation for malice and hatred. If they thought Joseph a tale bearer, they ought to have reproved him,—but there can be no reasons for hatred amongst brethren. The principal object of his brethren's hatred was his dreams, for when they saw him a-far off, when he was seeking them in Dothan, *they said, behold the dreamer cometh; come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.* For the same reason

for that the sons of Israel hated Joseph and his dreams, all wicked men hate divine revelation. It was a sad mortification to their pride to think, that they should *bow down to Joseph*. They knew the meaning of his dreams, but they did not love them. The doctrines of humility in the word of God, are also disgusting to all proud and haughty men.

Joseph's brethren appear to have been unfeeling and hardened wretches; for when they had thrown him into a pit, they sat down to eat as if nothing had happened. The children of Jacob were, undoubtedly an hardened and barbarous race of men for, except Joseph, Moses never says a good thing of any of them, though he has recorded several of their abominations.

The issue of this matter was, that they sold Joseph for a slave to a company of Ishmaelites, and Midianites, who carried him down to Egypt, and sold him again to Potiphar, a captain of Pharaoh's guard. It was here that his character began to open, and here I shall begin to consider it more particularly.

When Joseph came down to Egypt, he came with many disadvantages. He was sold as a slave most unnaturally, by his brethren, and again sold as a bondman to Pharaoh's officers. Providence, however, befriended him, and he found favour in the sight of Potiphar. His activity and his good behaviour procured him the good opinion of his master, who, in process of time, preferred him to the highest station in his service, and set him over all that he possessed. In this situation his time passed away easily, and he began to forget all his former sorrows,

sorrows ; but his virtue was not sufficiently tried, nor his character so conspicuous as Providence intended. He was to be exalted far above his present station, and must suffer greater abatement, before he was higher preferred. — *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

Joseph is said by Moses to have been a goodly person, and well favoured ; his beauty attracted the eyes of his lascivious mistress, who studied more the gratification of her own appetites than the honour of her Lord. There is nothing so shameless as a libidinous woman, nothing more revengeful than disappointed lust. A female must be far gone in wickedness, when she makes such an address as Potiphar's wife made to Joseph. *She cast her eyes upon Joseph, and said, lie with me.* This was plain enough. Joseph could not misunderstand her meaning. One would have thought that when she found Joseph so averse to her design, and that he refused her so positively, she would have given over her wanton solicitations ; but the text informs us, that she teased him from day to day. — At last she proceeded to downright violence, and grew mad with her lust. *She caught him by the garment, and said, lie with me.*

Joseph made use of such arguments with his master's wife, that if her lust had not been extravagant, beyond all bounds of honour, decency, and reason, she would have desisted in her solicitations, and have been ashamed of her behaviour : — *Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath into my hand.*

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*There is none greater in his house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife: how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God.* Such reasoning would have confounded any person, in whose conscience there was the smallest degree of sensibility. But this woman had got the better of her conscience. The frequent repetition of sin renders the soul callous, and makes any vice habitual, till at last it becomes in a manner necessary, and the want of gratification brings on a temporary madness. If persons were instructed to listen to the voice of their own reason and conscience in their earlier years, and taught to keep their passions and appetites in subjection to reason, the authority of conscience would keep every unruly appetite in order, and the passions would subside at the command of reason as easily as other actions of the body are ruled by the authority of the mind.

There is nothing which renders a rational creature so like a brute, as the irregular gratification of libidinous appetites. A person who, in spite of the law of his own mind, and the law of his maker, can violate his neighbour's bed, for the sake of a temporary gratification, ought to be ranked with the most filthy and impure of all animals; his company ought to be shunned by all sober persons, who love purity, and hate filthiness,

Joseph's mistress seems nearly to answer that character discribed by Solomon in the seventh chapter of his Proverbs. *She caught him, she kiss'd him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my*

*vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently seek thy face, and I have found thee.* There is nothing more ruinous to the characters, interests, souls, and bodies of men, than connection with abandoned women; and it is true what Solomon observes:—*The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit, he that is abhorred of the Lord falleth therein.*

The moral character of Joseph, on this occasion, shines forth with great splendour. The temptation at this time, intended to ensnare him, was artfully laid, and powerfully enforced.—His master was from home, there were no witnesses to disturb him in the pursuit of his amour, if he had been inclined to have gratified his appetite. His mistress was serious, to distraction, and was not likely to forgive him, for refusing her addresses; she also had it in her power to have favoured him in such a manner, as would not have been disagreeable to many young men. The whole was also most probably to be kept an inviolable secret, which, in an affair of such a serious nature, was a strong temptation.—But he resisted the temptation with a noble fortitude, and preserved his integrity at the expence of his ease, and present enjoyment.

Joseph's moral sentiments were not fine spun speculations, like those of the ancient philosophers, which had very little influence upon their behaviour and moral conduct; but where practical principles formed in his heart, which ruled his behaviour. The sages of Greece and Rome said many fine things concerning morality, and pointed out the precepts of virtue very clearly, but it does not appear that they either understood its true principles

ciples, or practised the precepts which they laid down to others. The reason of this seems to have been, they considered religion and morality to be two distinct systems. The fear and worship of the Deity was, with them, only a speculative maxim, and the idea of his presence and omniscience, only machinery, to adorn their speculations. Joseph established his morality upon the fear of God, and abstained from evil, because the Almighty had forbidden it.—*How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* is a noble, practical sentiment. The character of God contains the perfection of all moral excellency, and those, whose minds are truly affected with the beauties of the divine character, will always be the best moralists. If men were constantly considering Providence, and the goodness of God towards them, they would never transgress the laws of society, nor be guilty of what was unworthy of their nature.

It does not appear that Joseph was destitute of an affection for the sex, for he afterwards married a wife, by whom he had two sons; but he had a principle of love to God ruling in his heart, which would not suffer him to commit iniquity. Nothing tends so much to promote a good moral character, as just notions of God and religion.

Whether it proceeds from some power of sympathy which acts upon our moral sense, or from the right use of that active power, with which the mind is endowed by its maker, that good men are inclined to obey God, and abstain from iniquity, I will not pretend to affirm positively; but it appears exceedingly plain, that there is a spiritual inter-



course between the souls of good men and God, which makes them rejoice to please him, and fear to offend him. Whatever name we may please to give this intercourse, it is manifestly a practical principle, and a powerful spring-of action, in the minds of all who truly fear God.

The person, whose moral character is presently under our consideration, was a severe moralist, because he had just and worthy notions of the Deity, which operated practically in his soul. He considered the Almighty as a present witness of his thoughts and behaviour, and judged it both ungrateful and unbecoming to commit iniquity in his presence.— This manifestly implies, that he knew God, and believed in him; that he understood his law, and delighted in it. There is no part of education so necessary for a young man, as instruction in the fear and service of God. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* This fortifies the mind in the hour of temptation, and strengthens the soul in adversity. There are many young men who scamper through life without consideration of divine things, who, when they are hard pressed with afflictions, and find their system of sensations about to be dissolved, behave in the most pusillanimous manner, and act below the dignity of their nature. Those who are truly instructed in the principles of religion in the midst of affliction find a divine consolation, and in death are supported with good hope of better enjoyments.

Joseph's religion and morality would not have been so well known, provided they had not undergone this trial, and his character would not have appeared

appeared to such advantage ; the truth of his principles, and the sincerity of his heart, were rendered conspicuous by this temptation. There are few persons in the world at present of his age, and in his situation, that would reason so truly, or refine in the manner that he did. The stewards of captains of kings guards are not in these days so very strict, otherwise they are not obliged to common fame. This, perhaps, arises from their not being so religious as this son of Israel.

When the moral principles of religion are early instilled into the minds of mankind, they seldom miss to produce good effects in their behaviour.— Joseph had not learned his religion theoretically, as many young men do, without ever resolving to practise it ; but he exemplified his sentiments by a proper obedience to God's law, and the love of mankind. When persons have an opportunity to do good, and do it not, whatever they profess, they are not truly religious. *The tree is known by its fruits.*

It is an amiable part of a moral character to be faithful to the trust that is committed to us. In this Joseph was remarkable, and has set us a noble example, worthy of every person's imitation. Though he might have gratified his appetite without detection, yet, because his master placed intire confidence in him, he would not do any thing unworthy thereof, nor so much as indulge the sentiment. This patriarch has set an excellent pattern before all servants, and shewn them that they are bound, by the fear of God, to be faithful to the trust reposed in them. The virtue of this holy  
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man appears as conspicuous in his affliction, as when in prosperity; for when his master unjustly cast him into prison, he submitted, without repining; and, by his good behaviour, had the rigour of his confinement abated. With the same fidelity that he served his late master, he obeyed the commands of the keeper of the prison, and discharged the trust reposed in him with as much conscientiousness in a jail, as if he had been in the palace of Pharaoh's chief captain. In all his various employments he acted as in the sight of God, and performed his duty, as well as abstained from wickedness, because it was the divine will and commandment.

We do not find, in the history of Joseph's life, that ever his trials made him do a mean or wicked thing; his magnanimity never forsook him, and he was as joyful in his afflictions, as when he was enlarged. This was undoubtedly owing to his trust in Providence, which he was persuaded would not suffer the rod of the wicked to rest upon the back of the righteous, lest they should stretch forth their hands unto iniquity. It cannot be reasonably supposed, but that Joseph was educated and brought up in a manner suited to the condition of his father, who was a prince in those days, and bore no small rank among the children of the east. His humble submission to such mean offices as he was employed in, is no small argument of his greatness of spirit. A person of modern education, in a rank of life as high as Joseph, would make but a poor figure in such employment as he was engaged in. The son of an *English nobleman*, or of a *Scotch Lord*, would make an awkward figure in the station of a  
turkey



turnkey of a prison. A sense of his former rank, and the dignity of his family, would oppress him more than a consciousness of his iniquities, and a sense of his sins. But there are few of this character that would, in these pure modern times, suffer themselves to go to prison for a deficiency in a point of gallantry, or for fear of sinning against God. Had Joseph seen Lord Chesterfield's letters to his natural son, or been educated in the manner his lordship prescribes, he would not have incurred the displeasure of his mistress, nor felt the effects of her revenge, as he did. He had the fairest opportunity to have behaved *like a gentleman*, and to have gratified his passion, without the sauce of matrimony, or of being detected. But then he would neither have been such a good nor a great man as he was.

Before I leave this point, I cannot help making some observations upon the mode of our modern education, especially among those that are of such a rank of life as Joseph. *Mons. Rousseau's* scheme, which he proposes, foolish as it is, is infinitely better than that of Lord Chesterfield. The first teaches a young man nothing till he comes to years, but guards him from all bad objects that might corrupt the mind, but the latter instructs him how to sin politely, and learns him how to commit adultery with a good grace. *Rousseau* has at least one chance which his Lordship has not; he has a mind uncorrupted to begin with, and may perhaps ingraft the principles of virtue in it, but his Lordship plants so many nauseous weeds of sin and immorality in the mind of his young man, that it is impossible that strict virtue can thrive among them.

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Lord Chesterfield's scheme of education is most agreeable to flesh and blood, and has already more practical disciples than ever will fall to the share of Rousseau's academy. The honest citizen of Geneva seems to have written his plan merely for amusement, without ever intending that it should be put in practice, but our English nobleman has proceeded upon a more certain foundation. There are few nations where there are not thousands of his disciples, who pursue his precepts of gallantry in their most literal sense. But such abominable lessons from a father to a son, is not only a disgrace to nobility, but a shame to a nation. Had the young man reflected upon his own illegitimate character, he would have been ashamed of a father, who published his own folly to a son who was a living monument thereof. It is not easy to conceive how Lord Chesterfield could put confidence in his own son, after he had taught him such a refined species of hypocrisy; it is really impossible that either the son could love the father, or the father sincerely put confidence in the son. And there is no manner of doubt, but, when the young man's appetite and desire for money was as strong as his inclination for gallantry, that he would, upon his father's principles, think it no more a crime to steal, than to commit adultery, provided he could do it without being detected. The precept of the divine law, with regard to chastity, is equally binding with that which forbids theft. A man, who thinks it no crime to pollute his neighbour's bed, or seduce his daughter, would think it as little sin to steal his ox, or his ass, when he desired them, if he imagined

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he would escape punishment, or disgrace, as easily for the one as the other. It is *only manners*, and *not law*, that makes the difference. Every branch of a young man's education ought to be first ingrafted upon the fear of God, otherwise the force of custom and manners will have no lasting effect. What form of religious worship he should observe, let him find out that himself, from the Scriptures, but let his tutors study to persuade him of moral rectitude, and the omniscience of God; that, be where he will, he is always under the eye of the Deity. This will have a practical effect upon his manners with regard to society, and will be of more real service to himself, and the public, than manners without religion.

The present method of education is something like Lord Chesterfield's virtue, *exceedingly easy*. All ranks of people are fond of the polite parts of education, which relate to what may be called manners, while the moral part, or what relates to forming the heart is entirely neglected. The precepts of *benevolence*, *philanthropy*, *chastity*, and *self-denial*, are seldom now to be met with in modern places of education. The ancient first principle of wisdom, *the fear of the Lord*, is now in a great measure become unfashionable, and young persons would be but ill received into many families, if they were suspected of having any large share of it.— A religious moral education is an high privilege, and is of more real advantage to a young man than a large fortune; it will furnish him with pleasures that the world can neither give, nor take away. The moral character of Joseph is worthy of every



one's imitation, and the leading part of it consisted in his fearing of God.

Another conspicuous part of the character of Joseph is, that he was ready to forgive injuries, and to render good for evil. When his brethren, who had sold him, and intended to have murdered him, came down to Egypt for corn, he did not pursue them with revenge, but supplied their wants. He indeed spake roughly unto them at the first, and detained them for some days, with an intention to hear from them all that concerned his father, and their own situation; but, instead of revenging himself, as it was in his power to have done, his bowels earned towards them, and he made himself known to them, at their second coming, with all the tenderness of a brother. The whole of this history, as told by Moses, is moving and interesting; it is impossible to read it without being affected, in the most feeling manner.

Joseph had the same principle of action in all his behaviour; the fear of God prevailed in his heart, as a moving principle in his conduct towards his brethren, as well as in the other past parts of his conversation. After he had put them in prison for three days, he released them all, except Simeon, whom he kept, till they should bring Benjamin down; and desired them to carry corn for the famine of their houses; for, says he, *I fear God*. He remembered that while he was diverting himself at their expence, that their families might be in distress, and therefore had compassion on them. The fear of God prevailed over all that just resentment which they deserved at his hand. It is God-like to  
forgive

forgive injuries, and argues that the heart is tempered with the spirit of a divine imitation. When we were sinners, the apostle informs us *that Christ died for us*; and, in *this*, God hath commended his love to guilty men, that, when they were his enemies, he shewed them mercy and loving-kindness. Joseph's brethren had good reason to dread his revenge, but he expressed his forgiveness in such strong terms, and by such beneficent actions, that it removed all their fears. Actions are the best evidences of forgiveness. *If our enemy be hungry, we should give him meat; if he be thirsty, we should give him drink; and, if he is naked, we ought to clothe him*, if it is in our power to do it. No man who sees his enemy in distress, and does not relieve him, if he can do it, is really possessed of the fear of God. Forgiveness is the most effectual mean to make an enemy a friend. Those who intend to convert an enemy should heap favours upon him, and shew a sincere regard to him. There is nothing that overcomes enmity so powerfully as practical love: love softens the heart of an enemy, and subdues the enmity of the soul. Love and forgiveness are the most forceable causes of repentance. It is a general opinion, that forgiveness ought to follow repentance; but it will be found in truth that forgiveness goes before repentance. It is the goodness of God that leads sinners to repentance, and abhorrence of sin. Men speak according to their prejudices more than according to truth, when they affirm that sinners are not forgiven their iniquities until they repent. The Almighty not only promises pardon and forgiveness of sin to such as re-

pent, but has promised repentance itself, and exalted Jesus Christ as a Prince and Saviour to give it. Our merciful God and Saviour begets repentance in the souls of his enemies, by shewing how much he is their friend, by forgiving them. The gospel is a publication of the free forgiveness of sin; and it is the love expressed in this publication, that produces sorrow for iniquity. If the Almighty did not first shew his mercy, and love, in forgiving iniquity, there are none of the race of Adam that ever would repent, according to the true acceptation of the word *repentance*.

While I am upon this digression I must observe, that repentance comes under a twofold consideration in Scripture. It is a moral duty, and a divine privilege. The law of our nature, and the positive laws of religion, obliges all men every where to repent; but such is the condition of men, from what ever cause it proceeds, that there is nothing to which they have a greater aversion. They can never be freed from the obligation to repent, and they are unable, from the aversion they have to that duty, to perform it. This is a sad situation, but it is really the case with guilty sinners. They are like persons who have contracted debts they are not able to pay, but are still bound by the law to make good their obligation. There is no way of delivering them, but by forgiving them by a sovereign act of grace. By forgiving and setting them at liberty, their hearts are gained, and their souls softened, by an act of divine mercy. The gospel furnishes a remedy from the misery of our impenitent situation, by preaching forgiveness of sin freely,



freely, as a sovereign privilege of divine mercy :— And what the force of no law could do, the sovereign mercy in the gospel effects. Jehovah does to sinners as Joseph did to his brethren, first forgives them, and heaps favours upon them, and by his goodness brings them to repentance. The Almighty gains all his friends by love, and not by terror. It cannot be shewn from any instance in Scripture, that ever any person was made grateful by fear. Terror may make a person more a slave, but it will never make men obey dinterestedly.

As a citizen, Joseph is a character worthy of all men's imitation. As a servant, he was *just, honest, and faithful* to the trust committed to him. Even in prison he behaved as a good subject and citizen, *subject to the laws*, without repining. As providence had raised him up for greater purposes, it found means to advance him to an higher station. The long train of afflictions which he suffered, prepared him for the station he was to act in. The dreams of two of his fellow-prisoners, which he interpreted, were the means of opening an access to the king of Egypt, who called him out of prison for a similar purpose, and preferred him to the office of prime minister.

In this exalted station, his wisdom and uprightness appeared in the most conspicuous manner. His loyalty to his prince whom he now served, and his care of the people whom he governed, declare him to have been both a loyal subject, and a true patriot. The famine which he foretold at last approached, against which he had wisely provided in the years of plenty. In laying up store against the  
approaching

approaching famine he encroached on no man's property, nor made a monopoly of the corn of Egypt. By an ancient arbitrary custom the sovereign of Egypt had a fifth part, which he claimed, for his revenue. By an œconomy, before unknown in that nation, Joseph made such a saving in the public finances for seven years, that he both supported the dignity of the king's household, and saved the nation from ruin during the seven years of famine. Had Joseph bought up all the corn in the nation during the years of plenty, and laid it up in store, and sold it at an advanced price in the years of famine to the people, he might have truly been called an ingrosser, who took an advantage of the ignorance and distress of the subjects to enrich the crown, or himself. But it does not appear that he bought any at all, but gathered up the fifth, which belonged to the king, and saved it for the good of the people. His advice to Pharaoh is, *Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.*

It appears highly probable that, on ordinary occasions, the people farmed a good part of the king's fifth, and returned money for the corn into the treasury, but on this occasion it was received in kind, to answer the purposes of the present emergency. Had the people been wise, and provident, and believed the prophecy of Joseph, they might have prevented the effects of the famine, by laying up in store for themselves; but it is seldom that a body of people are so wise, as to restrain their appetites to guard against future contingencies. It is  
happy

happy when a nation has such a government as makes it their business to take care of the subjects. It is the end of all good government, though it is not often that it is executed as it is at this time in Egypt.

Joseph had now a fair opportunity to have enriched himself, as many prime ministers have done, at the expence of the people; but, instead of doing this, he only applied the king's revenue for their preservation, and did justice to both. During this dearth he sold the corn for money, or bartered it for cattle, or land; which, as they were purchased by the king's revenue, became the property of the crown. He also purchased themselves for servants to Pharaoh, which, at first view, has an ill appearance; but, in the conclusion, we will find, that he did not intend to make them slaves. Joseph clearly shewed the people of Egypt, what an enterprising prince and an ambitious minister might do to an inactive and dissipated nation, and that it was now in the power of the crown to enslave them. They might have plainly perceived that it was their own inattention, carelessness, and voluptuousness, that exposed them to slavery. Though arbitrary princes, and wicked ministers, are the immediate instruments of enslaving nations, yet it is the folly and wickedness of the inhabitants, that is the procuring cause thereof. When men mind nothing except luxury, and dissipation, gratifying every craving appetite, to the utmost extent, they are incapable of being free. It is *righteousness that exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people.* It has never been found that a virtuous people were  
enslaved



enslaved by their rulers. It is when they lose all sense of public virtue, that they become ripe for slavery.

It was in the power of Joseph to have made the Egyptians slaves to the last degree; he had brought all their property into the power of the king, and placed them in such a situation that they could not have easily rebelled; for they were dispersed at such distances, as put it out of their power to assemble to disturb the government.—It argued the consummate wisdom of Joseph as a prime minister, to disperse the people in the time of scarcity, lest they should have risen in riots to disturb the peace of the nation. In that sequestered situation they could have made little resistance against oppression, and must have submitted to slavery, if Joseph had intended to make them slaves. But as this wise minister took every necessary precaution to keep peace during the time of the famine, he was also careful, when Providence removed it, to establish the rights and privileges of the people, upon a lasting legal foundation. After he had given them seed to sow their ground, and restored to them their possessions, he confirmed, by a perpetual law, that the people should have four parts and the king the fifth. This is the first law that we have any account of in Egypt. The will and arbitrary pleasures of the sovereign, or his ministers were all the laws that were known in Egypt, before the days of Joseph. By this constitution, the king, as well as the people, were bound by law, that they could not encroach upon each others *prerogatives*, and *properties*

*properties*, without transgressing the fundamental law of the nation.

Before the days of Joseph there is not any certain or particular history of that country, nor any mention made of their kings, except that in the days of Abraham, that one of the name of Pharoah was sovereign of that nation, which appears to have been the name of all their kings for some ages.— From the time of Joseph the history of that nation commences, and it is next to a moral certainty, that Joseph was the first that gave them laws.— Formerly they were ruled by the mere arbitrary power of their kings, and by a certain form of manners, which custom had introduced. The lives and properties of the subjects were at the mercy of the prince; but now Joseph formed a constitution by which the prince and the people might know what was the prerogative of the king, and the rights of the subjects. This was more than ever had been obtained in Egypt before, and, for which, the nation was obliged to Joseph.

While the famine endured, the priests of Egypt had a privilege, which preserved them from selling their possessions; the king furnished them with provisions, and they had no occasion to sell their lands. Whether this was done out of respect to religion, or whether that the priests were persons of so great authority that Pharoah durst not offend them, is not quite evident. It is very clear from history, that in after times they had a very powerful influence. In the days of Herodotus, they were in possession of all the remarkable places, and held all the secrets in the land of Egypt. The clergy of that

country were generally persons of the highest rank, and were princes as well as priests; it would have been a dangerous experiment, for Joseph, who was but a stranger, to have interfered too much with their interests. It appears that they were in so high favour with Pharoah, that it would have been a rash adventure for Joseph to have meddled with them. Upon the whole, Joseph was both a loyal and patriotic minister.

It has often been affirmed, that Joseph, when he was in the house of Pharoah, learned the absurd practices of the Egyptians, in swearing by the life of Pharoah, and in divining by cups. Our translation indeed favours this opinion, but the original Hebrew does not affirm any such thing. The 15th verse in chapter xlii contains the reasons why Joseph detained his brethren, and why he intended to reprove them. As he was Pharoah's prime minister, he was under the strongest obligations to take care of his life. The words *bazoth, jibachence heje Pharah*, may be read with more ease and propriety; *for this reason you shall be tried; for the sake of Pharoah's life you shall not go forth hence; except your youngest brother come hither.* It was very natural to connect these two ideas, of his brethren being spies, and the life of Pharoah together. And by this manner of speech he made it appear more reasonable that they should be proved. If they had been spies, as he made his brethren believe that he thought them, he could not have been faithful to the life of the king, if he had suffered them to depart without proving them. So that instead of swearing by Pharoah's life, he only makes



a sort of argument from his safety, for detaining his brethren.—But it does not appear that he had any intention of swearing at all. Neither does it appear very consistent, that he would have sworn profanely at the very time he had the fear of God before his eyes; for he tells them in the 18th verse *that he feared God.*

As to the other charge against Joseph, that he divined by cups, it is altogether without foundation. The words in chapter iv. *nachesh jenechesh bu*, for which he strictly enquireth, are the words of Joseph's servant, when he pursued his brethren for the cup which was put in Benjamin's sack. The whole sentence reads thus, *Is not this it in which my Lord drinketh, and for which he maketh strict enquiry?*—It had all the appearance of a strict search, when he sent his servant in such haste to pursue them. In the 15th verse, Joseph is made to say, *wote you not that such a man as I could divine?* But the text reads, *did you not know that such a man as I would make an enquiry.*—Ye could not well imagine that I would not enquire after a cup of so much value; I would not be worthy of such a trust as Pharoah has committed to me, if I were not qualified to take care of my own affairs. Thus I think I have made it appear, that Joseph neither swore by the life of Pharoah, nor practised the custom of divining by cups.—And it will appear, that the character of Joseph is one of the most perfect of all the sons of Jacob, in whatever light it is considered. His early zeal for virtue, the favour which God gave him, by an early revelation, his fortitude under trials and afflictions, his regard to the honour of

God, his readiness to forgive injuries, his faithfulness to his trust, in all conditions of life, and the great care he took of his father and brethren, shews that he was an extraordinary character as a private man:—But as a public minister he was also an extraordinary person. He shewed his wisdom in balancing the rights of the people, with the power of the crown, and made laws *the rule of both*, which does not appear to have been the case in Egypt before this time. In a word, he was wise, humble, honest, just and righteous;—and add to all, he was steady, and resolute, in maintaining what was right. These things shew that he was a very extraordinary character.

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## LECTURE XVIII.

*The Eloquence of the Patriarch JACOB.—  
The Power of a Gift.—A comparative  
View of ancient and modern Oratory.—  
The Use and Abuse of Oratory in religious  
Discourses, &c.*

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GENESIS xlix. 8,—10, 11, 12.

*Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise;  
thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy  
father's children shall bow down before thee.—*

*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-  
giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come,  
and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

*Binding his fole unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto  
the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine,  
and his clothes in the blood of grapes.*

*His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white  
with milk.*

**I**T is a very common thing for mankind to think themselves wiser than those who have been before them, and to value themselves upon their attainments, at the expence of the characters of their predecessors.—But upon enquiry it will be found, that, in many things, former generations were as wise as those who came after them, and the most ancient



ancient ages were as wise as the present. The knowledge of many things is rendered manifest by different forms of expression, and modes of exhibition, and such of these as are most *simple, easy, and plain*, will always convey the greatest degree of knowledge to the minds of men. Skill in oratory appears to have been very ancient, and all the beauties of language seem to have been used in the days of the patriarchs. Without defining figures of rhetoric, or understanding them, they practised them all; and by a sort of instinctive education, have laid a foundation for all those rules that are now to be found in the several systems of eloquence, which the greatest masters have given us for *standards of speech, and composition*. The various books of rhetoric are a sort of dictionaries to teach people to understand *quibbles*, and run generally through all the letters of *the alphabet*, except a few, which they seem to have reprobated \*. I shall have reason to shew that these *discarded letters* have as good a right to be the indices of figures of rhetoric, as any among the five and twenty in the English alphabet.—At present, we shall proceed to consider the eloquence of Jacob.—This patriarch seems to have spoken best when others can scarcely speak any at all; he spoke best when he was going to die. In his whole life he never made a speech that we know of with so much vigour, and so full of sentiment, as that which he made upon his death-bed, which has been recited in the entry of this discourse. The images are natural, and rise gradually to a grandeur uncommon in speeches of persons that

\* B, F, K, N, Q, W, X.

that are old, and especially dying through old age. The whole of this speech is a sort of poetry, adorned with the grandest images ; and, when put into verse, reads both smoothly, and is exceedingly grand \*. The idioms of our language are so different

\* *Juda atta Joduka Acheka, Jadda be-oreph  
Cbeke: Iphetacaru leka Bene abeka.  
Gur Arjeb Jebuda metereph Bene agitab:  
Carab robets Ci-arjeb, u-celabi mi Jecimenu ;  
Lo Jasur sebet mi-Judah u mechekok miben ragelau,  
Ad ci-Jaba Shiloh Jiceat ammim oferi,  
Lajepen Jirob ve lasreka Bene Attonu: Cibbes  
Ea-ajim le-Busbo u-bedam anebim Sutko Haklili,  
Ejanim mi-ajim ; u-leben Sheannim me-Chalab,*

PARAPHRASED thus :

I.

All Jacob's seed shall Judah's name confess ;  
Beneath thy yoke shall all thine enemies bow,  
Their stubb'rn necks ; and all the tribes shall bless  
The name *Jekudah*, and submit to you.

II.

Than lions young, or strong, more pow'rful thou,  
Thy mighty arm shall make thy foes obey ;  
All crowns and sceptres at *thy nod* shall bow,  
Thy hand shall rule with an immortal sway.

III.

While sun and moon shall go their constant round,  
Thy truth sha'l be a sceptre in thy hand ;  
When earthly thrones and crowns are all put down,  
Thy throne on an eternal base shall stand.

IV.

rent from those of the Hebrew, and other eastern tongues, that, without some understanding of the genius of both, it is not easy to perceive the beauty of the one, when translated into the other. An eastern at once would comprehend the ideas that  
are

## IV.

Thy word of truth thy powerful sceptre shall  
Make all the tribes of this vast world to yield:—  
And when thy power has subjugate them all,  
Thou, Shiloh, shall stand *last* upon the field.

## V.

Then barren lands and fruitless fields shall bear  
A glorious verdure, and eternal bloom;  
And vines shall carry grapes through all the year,  
And hills and vales proclaim that Shiloh's come.

## VI.

Ev'n lisping babes shall utter Shiloh's praise,  
And when they play their mirthful gambols round,  
No asp, nor adder, in those Halcyon days,  
Shall hurt, or poison, from the healthful ground.

## VII.

The sportive lamb shall round the leopard play,  
The wanton kid dance round the tyger's den,  
And lions, like to oxen, feed on hay,  
When Shiloh rules alone, the sons of men.

These words of Jacob make a very agreeable song, and have some as fine images in them as are to be met with in any part of the Bible, or any other book whatsoever. Under the name Judah, Jacob sets forth the character of *the Messiah*, and prophesies, in Judah's name, what was to happen



are designed to be expressed by the bold images in Jacob's speech, while people in this part of the world stand in need of a commentary to explain the figures that are used in this most excellent and grand harangue.

Though this part of Jacob's last speech be the most interesting, yet the whole of it, as it respects all his children, is marvelously beautiful. The apostrophe which he makes in verse 18th is truly a beauty beyond all rules of art. *I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah.* This shews what was uppermost in his heart, and what strengthened his soul to speak so nobly upon his death-bed; he had the good hope of salvation before his eyes, and he calls it *Jehovah's salvation*;—*Lishuateka Kivita Jehovah*,—*I have hoped in thy Jesus, O Jehovah.* With his eyes upon his Saviour, it was no wonder that his soul was invigorated. When his heart was inditing a good matter concerning the king, it made his

happen, when he, *to whom every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, shall set up his kingdom.* It was then that the enemies of Christ were to be subdued, by the peaceful sceptre of his power, *the gospel*; then, that there should be such a change and reformation, as should astonish all people, which should be as wonderful, as if *serpents should not either bite, poison should not kill, leopards, lions, and tygers should not rent and tear their prey.*—This prophecy was in part fulfilled at the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, when the very nature of things was altered, and a new system of religious policy was introduced. It was then that God choose the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and things that were accounted nothing, to confound things that were highly esteemed.

his tongue like the pen of a ready writer. Tho' Jacob was shewing his children concerning what was to happen them in the latter days, yet he was more taken up with the praises of God than with any concern about his children.—And indeed the whole of Jacob's last words are only a song of praise to God, containing a prophecy of future events. Had these prophecies come from the mouth of a *Demosthenes*, or a *Cicero*, all the world would have heard them repeated in books of eloquence, for examples of the *sublime*, the *grand*, or the *pathetic*. But in all the orations of these orators, there are not any idioms so noble, or images so grand, as these in Jacob's last speech. Longinus observes, that it is a great beauty in speaking, or writing, to change the person, and bring the reader, or hearer, as it were, present to the action, or in sight of the object. This is well executed in Jacob's speech.—*Judah is a lion's whelp from the prey my son thou art gone up.*—*Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens.*—*Naphtali is a hind let loose, he giveth goodly words.* This sort of speech brings the object near, and represents it as present, though the thing spoken of was really future, and only to be fulfilled in the posterity of Jacob's sons. The reader of this speech of Jacob would almost think he saw *Judah couching as a lion*,—*Issachar couching like an ass*, and *Naphtali bounding like a hind of the morning*. But the greatest excellency of this speech is, that the characters that are drawn in it, by way of prophecy, long before they existed, really happened according to the predictions concerning them. *Nature*, as well as *religion* will, without much art, teach many figures of rhetoric, that the speaker himself

himself has not the least knowledge of when he speaks, or utters them. When a person is speaking upon a disagreeable subject, according as the objects of disgust are crowded in the speech, the higher will the aversion of the mind be, till at last it will break off either by an *apostrophe*, or *exclamation*. In the beginning of Jacob's speech this is very evident. When speaking of the characters of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, he crowds together such a number of disgustful actions, that his soul could repeat no more without giving vent to that concern that was upon his mind. *O my soul come not thou into their secret: Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they houghed oxen. Cursed be their anger for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel; I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.* The good man gives a kind of vent to his lively indignation; but when he curses, he only execrates their anger, and not themselves. In this part of Jacob's dying speech, we see the working of his zeal against iniquity; and, at the same time, a feeling regard for his offending children. It is something amazing, that this dying patriarch seems to out-do himself in expression, when he comes to describe a good character. His language is both smooth and lofty, and his words swell with the strongest sentiments; every word contains a crowd of ideas. Speaking of Naphtali in the 21st verse, he says, *Naphtali is a hind let loose, he giveth goodly words.* These words, in the original, are fine and expressive;—*Naphtali Ajalah Shelucab he-noten Imre Shapher.* Naphtali



signifies *one that struggles and wrestles*, and when joined with *a hind let loose*, points out how liberty is obtained, or freedom preserved. The tribe of Naphtali was one of the tribes of Israel in the days of the Judges, that recovered the liberties of their brethren, after they had been enslaved for some time by Jabin, king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor. In Deborah's account of the tribes of Israel at that time, we hear of none that jeoparded their lives unto the death, in the high places of the field, except Zebulon and Naphtali. These were true servants of liberty; they accounted life not worth the having, unless they were free. Of all the tribes of Israel there was not one durst shew their faces, to defend the *rights of Jacob*, till the men of Naphtali began, under the command of Barak their chief captain. These, like morning hinds, flew upon their enemies, and recovered the liberties of their country. They *struggled*, they *wrestled*, they *fought*, and would rather die in the field of battle like freemen, than live like slaves.

Israel had now been twenty years tributary to Jabin; and, perhaps, this king of Canaan thought that he had a sufficient right, by conquest, to do with them what he pleased.—Twenty years was a sort of prescription, and many kings would have called it rebellion in the Israelites when they rose in arms against Jabin.—But it is to be observed, that he mightily oppressed them \*, which was a sufficient reason for their revolt. There can be no sin in rebellion, when people are oppressed unjustly. The word has only an ill meaning, when it is used

to

\* Judg. iv. 3.

to signify a resistance of lawful authority, when there is no oppression. The Hebrew word, which we render *rebels*, signifies literally *such as are afflicted*, because it seldom happens that a people will rebel under a good government, and it is oppression that generally provokes them to rebel. Rebellion, in Scripture, is considered an *evil thing*, when it is practised against lawful sovereigns, who execute just laws, and do not oppress their subjects. Absalom's rebellion against his father, and Sheba's conspiracy, were sinful rebellions; but the ten tribes revolted from Rehoboam, it was a just exertion of the people's power, and is worthy of imitation wherever the like case shall happen. The God of heaven never intended governments to be hurtful to his people, but gives them to defend the just rights of all individuals; and, when they do not answer this purpose, they are none of the institutions of the Almighty. Rebellion then is no sin, but a just exercise of self-defence against oppressors. When rulers begin to turn oppressors, they generally suppose that the people are not proper judges of their necessities, and have no right to enquire concerning the reasons of their requisitions. But this is a mistake that some have found to their cost when it was too late, and will always find it, when pursued too far, end in a very disagreeable conviction. In the days of David we find some women wiser than the king; and, in all ages, there will be found among the people, some who are as competent judges of right and wrong as any in high life. It is seldom that oppressors act according to their consciences, but according to the impulse of their lusts,  
and

and passions. They are then very improper judges of their own necessities, and but bad guardians of the rights of mankind. In countries where the people are supposed to be judges of what is necessary for the salvation of their souls, it is something strange, that they should not be considered to be judges of what is necessary for the management of their temporal affairs, but that a certain number should pretend to judge always for the rest, and attempt to wrest the power of themselves, and their property, out of their own hands. If men are not judges of *things temporal*, it is not easy to conceive how they can be *judges of things spiritual and invisible*. The Roman Catholics are more consistent; for they trust the common people neither with the things which pertain to their *own salvation*, nor with *the government of themselves*.—And this I consider to be the reason why some protestant powers have, on many occasions an hankering after popery; they find it the *only true system* to keep the common people under oppression, and to make them *good and true beasts of burden*.

The character of Naphtali given by Jacob is a *noble one*,—he is compared to a hind let loose, a *true image of liberty*;—and it is added, *he giveth goodly words*,—*elegant words* in the Hebrew. Where liberty is enjoyed, eloquence will prevail. There are few good orators under an arbitrary government; oppression breaks the spirit of men of genius, and makes them sycophants and flatterers\*.

Mr

\* “ It is not long since a philosopher of my acquaintance discoursed me in the following manner: It is, said he to me,



Mr Smith, in his life of Longinus, observes the difference between Cicero speaking to Cataline, and pleading for Marcellus before Cæsar. In the first oration he speaks with freedom, without flattery; but in the latter he speaks like a sycophant, and crouds his oration with apologies, and the meanest adulation. The same author observes, that the spirit of adulation, which prevailed in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, lowered one of the greatest geniuses that ever lived, and turned even the *Lord Bacon* into a sycophant; and, he adds, that this will be the case, wherever power encroaches upon the rights of mankind. A servile fear will clog and fetter every rising genius, will strike such an awe upon it in its infant state, as will  
stick

me, as well as to many others, a just matter of surprise, how it comes to pass in the age we live, there are many geniuses well practised in the arts of eloquence and persuasion, that can discourse with dexterity and strength, and embellish their style in a very graceful manner, but none (or so few, that they are next to none) who may be said to be truly great and sublime. The scarcity of such writers is general throughout the world. May we believe, at last, that there is solidity in that trite observation, that Democracy is the nurse of genius; that fine writers will be found only in this sort of government, with which they flourish and triumph, or declines and die? Liberty, it is said, produces fine sentiments in men of genius, it invigorates their hopes, excites an honourable emulation, and inspires an ambition and thirst of excelling. And what is more, in free states there are prizes to be gained which are worth disputing. So that by this means the natural faculties of the orators are strengthened and polished by continual  
practice,

stick for ever after, and check its generous sallies. No one will write or speak well in such a situation, unless on subjects of mere amusement, and which cannot, by any indirect tendency, affect his masters. For how shall the vassal dare to talk sublimely on any point wherein his Lord acts meanly?

But as despotic and unbridled power is generally obtained, so it is as often supported by unjustifiable methods. The splendid and ostentatious pageantry of those at the helm, gives rise to luxury and profuseness among the subjects. These are the fatal sources of dissolute manners, of degenerate sentiments, of infamy and want. As pleasure is supplied by money, no method, however mean, is omitted to procure the latter, because it leads to the

practice, and the liberty of their thoughts, as it is reasonable to expect, shines conspicuously out in the liberty of their designs.

But for our part, pursued he, we were born in subjection, in lawful subjection, it is true, to arbitrary government. Hence the prevailing manners made too strong an impression upon our infant minds, and the infection was sucked in with the milk of our nurses. We never tasted liberty, that copious and fertile source of all that is beautiful, and of all that is great; and hence are we nothing but pompous flatterers. It is from hence that we may see all other qualifications displayed to perfection in the minds of slaves; but never yet did a slave become an orator. His spirit being effectually broke, the timorous vassals will still be uppermost; the habit of subjection over-awes and beats down genius, for, according to Homer.

Jove fix'd it certain, that whatever day

Makes man a slave takes half his worth away." *Pope.*

SMITH'S LONGINUS.

the enjoyment of the former. Men become corrupt and abject, their minds are enervated, and insensible of shame. The faculties of the soul (in the words of Longinus) will then grow stupid, their spirits will be lost, and good sense and genius must be in ruins, when the care and study of man is engaged about the mortal, worthless part of himself, and he has ceased to cultivate virtue, and polish his noble part,—the soul. Upon the whole it is plain from Jacob's character of *Nephtali*, that eloquence and liberty goes hand in hand. The patriarch's blessing of Joseph is also a fine piece of eloquence. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough  
" by a well, whose branches run over the wall.  
" The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at  
" him, and hated him; but his bow abode in  
" strength, and the arms of his bow were made  
" strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob;  
" from thence is the shepherd and stone of Israel.  
" Even by the God of thy father who shall help  
" thee, and by the Almighty who shall bless thee  
" with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the  
" deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts,  
" and of the womb. The blessings of thy father  
" hath prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph,  
" and on the crown of the head of him that was  
" separated from his brethren." The several redundant expressions of this blessing and prophecy concerning Joseph instead of being heavy in the recital, give rather a sort of pleasure to the reader; for the words that are repeated in the same sen-



tance, are the very expressions which are most entertaining, and upon which the mind rests most. The image of a *fruitful bough* is natural, and beautiful,—but the description of a *bough by a well* heightens the grandeur, and by its *branches running over a wall* consummates the image. The afflictions of Joseph are finely painted in a few words,—*The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him.* The cause of his brethrens ill usage is put last, as a thing he would have willingly concealed if he could,—for, he adds, *and hated him.* The *cause* and *reason* of his fortitude in his troubles, and his enlargement are strongly expressed,—*but his bow abode in strength, &c.* The latter part of verse 24, is above all beautiful ;—*from thence is the shepherd and the stone of Israel.* To careless readers of scripture this will appear rather puzzling than beautiful, but by comparing this passage with Isaiah xxviii. 16. it will appear to be both plain and very significant. “ Therefore thus  
 “ faith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a  
 “ foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone ; a sure foundation.” The Messiah through whom the mercy of God is bestowed upon sinners, is compared to a *shepherd* and a *stone*, because he leads and nourishes his people, and is the foundation of all their hope and confidence towards God. His words of truth, his names and characters, described in divine revelation, are real food to the souls of good men ; and they establish all their confidence upon his gracious word. The Messiah is the stone and shepherd of Israel, *who feedeth Joseph like a flock*, and upon whom, as the sure foundation,

foundation, all his sincere people build their hopes of future enjoyments.

The oratory of Jacob is full of the most fit comparisons; the character of the several tribes are compared to that which they were most like.—Issachar is compared to *a strong ass couching down between two burdens*: This is a very proper image of a lazy, slothful people, that preferred ease to liberty, and would rather suffer oppression than exert their own powers to vindicate their privileges. This is a very *mean* and *despicable* character, and Jacob has described it in a few words, by comparing such a people to *a strong, lazy, sluggish ass*. He compares *Dan* to *a serpent by the way, an adder in the path*, and there are some things in the history of that tribe which makes the comparisons just. It was in that tribe that idolatrous worship was first set up, and the principles of the Israelites poisoned thereby, in the days of Jereboam.

But I shall now come to the practical part of Jacob's eloquence, and shew, that if any orator could practise his method, that he would convert nineteen out of twenty to his side, of any audience that commonly is to be met within these modern times.

Jacob had two methods of perswading, which I do not find particularly mentioned in any of our systems of rhetoric. They are two very invincible figures in speech.—The first may be called donation, and the second adulation. Here is an example of the first in Gen. xxxii. 13: When *Jacob sent two hundred she-goats, and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams.—Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine and ten bulls,*

*twenty she-asses and ten foles.* At a moderate computation, the value of all these cattle would amount to upwards of four hundred pounds. If every orator, before he began to harrangue, could afford to give every one of his audience such a present as this, he would offer fair to bring them all over to his side, whether he was right or wrong. But if to this figure of *donation*, he should add that of *adulation* there would be no resisting the force of his eloquence. It would even melt hearts of stone, and obtain entrance into the soul of a cardinal. How smooth and flattering are these words?—*These are a present from thy servant Jacob to my Lord Esau.* My Lord Esau! these are enchanting words; for the most of men are fond of titles, and of being thought great men.—But such smooth words and so noble a present at the end of them, were powerful to the last degree.

Esau had good reason to be offended at Jacob, and came with an intention to do him hurt, but Jacob made a convert of him in an instant. When Esau asked Jacob what was the meaning of the droves which he met, the patriarch replied, *These are to find grace in the sight of my Lord.* A good large gift was the most powerful language; it says much in a short time, and produces wonderful effects. A man that has money, and can part with it properly, will be accounted a good orator, without saying a single word. The words of Jacob would have been little better than wind, provided he had been as poor as when he went down to Padanaram. But gifts and flattery are in a sense omnipotent; flesh and blood cannot resist their influence



ence. A preacher that is possessed of a thousand a year, and is disposed to live upon two hundred, and divide the rest amongst his hearers, may say what he pleases, he will be an orator—a divine—a philosopher, and convert more sinners *to his way*, than ever our Saviour did in the days of his flesh.

Though never man spake like Jesus of Nazareth, even by the confession of his enemies, yet he made very few converts in the days of his flesh, merely because he was poor and honest. Instead of giving *temporal presents*, or speaking smooth words, he declared that *he had no where to lay his head*, and that his hearers *were a generation of vipers, who could not escape the damnation of hell*. It is impossible that a man, however *eloquent* he may be, can ever be an orator in the esteem of the public, unless he either be rich, or supposed to be so; for if ever he is found out to be poor, the force of his eloquence is at an end. He will then be no more *than a sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol*. What is it that makes the sermons of the bishops so learned and so much applauded, but that their authors were rich, and possessed of so many thousands a year? Though a poor man should save a city by his wisdom he must not expect to be regarded; and though he could speak like an angel, he will not meet with approbation from the public, provided he keeps strictly to the line of truth. The method which Jacob pursued in addressing his brother Esau, is the most perswasive, with the generality of mankind, and a man that can both observe the figure of *donation* and *adulation*, will never fail to persuade an audience. All the rest of the tropes and figures are nothing to these

these, for gaining the approbation of mankind in general. And what is more than all, an orator will increase in popularity, as he increases in the practice of these two figures of rhetoric. Neither old age, the decline of genius, nor the commission of faults, will affect a man's reputation with any congregation, if he only is skilful in the application of good gifts, and has the gift of flattery. Even the most censorious hypocrite, whose practice is to slander almost all characters, will spend liberal quantities of praise for a good premium, and admire the speaker who flatters his pride, and encourages his vanity.

I must now proceed to take a comparative view of ancient and modern oratory. The most ancient that I know of, is that which is to be found in the scriptures, compared with which, that of Greece and Rome are modern.—But as the scriptures are entirely religious, and the eloquence displayed in them is intended only to persuade men to serve the Almighty, and to obey him, I shall only run the parallel between the scripture method of persuasions and that of some of the modern teachers of righteousness.

There is one special quality in Bible eloquence, and that is, that the grandeur of the object, and the style of the description are suited to one another. In all places of scripture, where the attributes of Deity are described, the language of the writer is sublime and lofty, without the least mixture of bombast.

The prophet Isaiah has given us an example of the true sublime.—“Who hath measured water  
in

“ in the hollow of his hand? And metted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.—Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket; and are counted as the small dust in the balance; behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations are before him as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them as a tent to dwell in. That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity \*.” This is a description of the power and majesty of the Deity, without an improper expression in the whole conjunction of metaphors. The prophet first makes the Almighty measure the waters in the hollow of his hands,—then met out the heaven with the span,—next comprehend the dust in a measure, and then weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. All the metaphors are so grand, and at the same time so well calculated for conveying the ideas of knowledge and power, that there is neither too much nor too little expressed.

When the same prophet is describing the merciful and mild government of the Messiah, how admirably does he adapt his stile to his subject? *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

These

\* Iiai. xl. 12.



These pastoral images are *pleasing* and *sweet*, like the subject they are made use of to express: they both charm *the ear*, and delight *the mind*; and the painting is so lively, that you would almost think that you saw the very transaction. All the sublime flights in the heathen writers are flat and insipid when compared to Scripture eloquence. They may truly be compared to the small dust of the balance, when set in competition with the grandeur of Scripture eloquence. When the prophets intended to persuade men of the *majesty*, *power*, and *providence of God*, they set forth all the beauties of his character, and left the striking dignity and splendour of the object to produce persuasion. In a word, they paint their subjects so well, that they persuade with an irresistible force.

To make a long comparison between the eloquence of Scripture and modern oratory would perhaps be considered as an odious thing. I shall therefore only give an example, or two, to shew the difference between the one and the other. There are perhaps no writers who, in their different departments, have become more popular for the art of arranging a set of words in religious discourses, than Dr Tillotson, Mr Harvey, and Dr. Fordyce. The first has long been considered as the standard of pulpit eloquence among one sort of orators, the second of another sort, and the third a sort of medium between both. But none of them have ever attained to either the sublimity or simplicity of the eloquence of Scripture. There is a real want of natural idioms in almost all modern compositions of religious sentiments.

There

There is nothing more common in sermons, and religious orations, than *that figure* called *antithesis*, or *opposition*; which, when well conducted, tends much to persuade the mind of truth; but never any writers have come up to the truth of the Scriptures in this particular. The things set in opposition are generally set at such a distance, by a number of useless words, that the memory is ready to lose the propriety of the antithesis, and forget the difference between what goes before and follows after. Dr Tillotson, in his sermon concerning the advantages of religion to societies, expresses himself in this manner. “ Religion, wherever it  
“ is planted, is certainly the greatest obligation upon conscience, to all civil offices and moral duties.  
“ Chastity and temperance, and industry, do in  
“ their own nature tend to health and beauty.  
“ Truth and fidelity in our dealings do create mutual love and good-will, and confidence among  
“ men, which are the greatest bands of peace.  
“ And, on the contrary, wickedness doth in its  
“ own nature produce many public mischiefs. For  
“ as sins are linked together, and draw on one another, so every vice hath some temporal inconvenience annexed to it, and naturally flowing from  
“ it. Intemperance and lust breed infirmities and  
“ diseases, which, being propagated, spoil the strain  
“ of a nation. Idleness and luxury bring forth  
“ poverty and want; and this tempts men to injustice, and that causeth enmity and animosity,  
“ and these bring on strife and every evil work \*.”

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\* Tillot. vol. I. pag. 403. octavo.

The intermediate terms, which are used as expletives in this figure, instead of illustrating the subject, tend rather to darken it; for what consists of four sentences ought to have been comprehended in one only. There was no occasion for the illustration of the parts of the antithesis, for all men take them for granted. Let us compare some Scripture antithesis with this. Solomon makes use of many—I shall only offer a few. *The house of the wicked shall be overthrown; but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.*—*Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people.* The prophet Isaiah makes use of the same manner of speech. *We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.* There is a beautiful figure of the same kind in Lament. i. 1. *How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow, she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces! how is she become tributary?* All the members of the figure are natural, concise, and yet perspicuous. Doctor Tillotson, perhaps, excels the most of preachers for plainness, and the proper use of figures; but, when compared with *the beautiful stile of divine revelation*, his language is flat;—his simplicity groveling;—his sublimity, bombast. It is no disparagement to Dr Tillotson that he could not speak and write like the Holy Ghost. I mean by this contrast to shew, that the nearer we come to the Scripture-mode of speaking in religious subjects, the more perfect will our eloquence be.

Mr Harvey, in illustrating the gospel and the righteousness it sets forth, in his XVIth Dialogue, makes



makes use of a strange bombast-fort of eloquence. He says, " It is also a most precious and valuable truth, such as I would hold fast, and never let go. When I search for my own endowments, I find nothing that I dare venture to plead. Being in my best moments, and in midst of all my duties, a sinner. As this is at all times my undoubted character, I have at all times an undoubted warrant to say the uncreated wisdom *callet*h me: the blessed Jesus came to save me: the great Messiah *suffered* for me.

" Let me illustrate the point.—Romulus, you know, the founder of the Roman empire, was a poor prince; had but an handful of subjects, and very scanty territories. What expedient could he devise to enlarge the boundaries of the one, and augment the number of the other? He issued a proclamation, addressed to out laws and criminals; all that were involved in debt, or obnoxious to punishment. Promising that as many as should settle under his dominion, should be secured from prosecution, and vested with considerable privileges. We will suppose a person in those distressed circumstances. Upon hearing the welcome invitation, he hangs down his head, and with a dejected air cries, ' I am a debtor, a criminal, and therefore unworthy of the royal protection.' What answer should be made to such a dispirited complainer? Make the same to yourself, whenever you are disposed to renew the present objections,—remembering that the infinite and eternal Sovereign, to display the magnificence of his majesty, and manifest the

“ riches of his goodness, has commissioned his ambassadors to publish in every nation under heaven,—that all unhappy sinners that are oppressed by the devil, and liable to damnation, may come to Christ. May in this manner obtain *pardon*, *righteousness*, and all the privileges of children.”

The comparison that this popular divine makes, to illustrate his subject, is, in no respects, suited to the end to which it is applied. The proclamation of Romulus, compared with the proclamation of the gospel, almost borders upon the profane. What Romulus offered in his proclamation was totally in the power of those to whom it was made to accept. Their natural and ordinary powers were sufficient to determine them to embrace the opportunity and the privilege; for we find all men ready to embrace their own private temporal interest.—But when do we find them so readily disposed to embrace spiritual and divine blessings, in opposition to honour, worldly interest, and the other pleasures of life? The gospel, which sets forth salvation through Jesus Christ, is as plain with regard to self-denial, and it requires something more than a ministerial invitation to make men deny themselves. The action of coming to Christ, when applied to the mind, implies spiritual inclination, and a full persuasion of his whole fitness for salvation in all respects; and he who comes in the true sense of the word is first drawn by the influence of divine power. And what is more, he does not come to Christ for justification, but he comes because he is justified. It is the justifying love of Christ that constrains him to come to him as his Saviour, and his

his friend. Mr Harvey's comparison, or simile, taken from Romulus, even destroys the whole of his appropriation in the method of justifying sinners. The proclamation of Romulus, if there is any meaning in the comparison, was an intimation of pardon before they came under his power; and they came because they were really forgiven by a proclamation. It was the certainty of forgiveness that animated them to come to the Roman dominions. The promise of privileges brought them. But it was not their calling the privileges theirs that made them so, but the royal promise, and proclamation. If calling Christ ours be the appropriating act of faith, and this appropriating act is the justifying act of faith, then all sinners who hear the gospel, have both an equal right and an equal certainty of salvation, otherwise right and possession are not infallibly connected in the promise of God; which, I suppose, Mr Harvey did not intend by his illustration. The apostle assures us that the promise is sure to all the seed; so right by promise, and possession, are infallibly connected. If all who hear the gospel have a right by promise to call Christ theirs, there is no manner of doubt but they will all be saved,—which is a thing rather to be wished, than expected, according to Scripture. Mr Harvey and Mr Wesley might have agreed upon this head.

Let us see how Scripture oratory describes this point. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the fruits of Christ's death, is more certain concerning forgiveness of sins than Mr Harvey. He says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,"

" he



“ he shall see his seed, and prolong his days, and  
 “ the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his  
 “ hand. He shall see the travel of his soul and be  
 “ satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous  
 “ servant justify many; for he shall bear their ini-  
 “ quities. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel  
 “ be justified, and shall glory.—I bring near my  
 “ righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my sal-  
 “ vation shall not tarry, and I will place salvation  
 “ in Zion for Israel, my glory.”—The apostle Paul  
 speaks much in the same stile concerning justification.  
 “ Being freely justified by his grace, through the  
 “ redemption that is in Jesus, whom God hath  
 “ set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in  
 “ his blood, to declare his righteousness for the re-  
 “ mission of sins that are past through forbearance  
 “ of God; to declare at this time his righteousness;  
 “ that he might be just, and the justifier of them  
 “ that believeth in Jesus.” Rom. iii. 24.—In all  
 the account of justifying the ungodly, it is never  
 said that they are justified by such an appropriation  
 as that of saying that Christ died for them in parti-  
 cular. This the gospel does not reveal, and this  
 no man is commanded to believe. Those who be-  
 lieve the divine testimony, are undoubtedly justified,  
 without being obliged to believe what is not re-  
 vealed in the whole word of God; namely, that  
 Christ died for such, and such persons by name.  
 This may be a fruitful source of popular eloquence,  
 to gratify the pride of the preacher, and the hypo-  
 crisy of the hearer, but is neither true in itself, nor  
 profitable to the souls of men.

Let

Let us now give an example from Dr Fordyce, in his sermons to young women. As this sort of style has been the *ton* for some years, and these sermons have been more read than the scriptures, by comparing some passages together, I hope to shew the folly of preferring human oratory, even in point of style to the style of the holy scriptures. Let us hear the doctor a little. "For the more general  
" commerce of social life, a few advices may not be  
" improper. That, like the ordinary duties of reli-  
" gion, may be directed with tolerable advantage by  
" human precept. The harmonies of holy friendship,  
" like the sublimer contemplations of the divinity,  
" must depend more immediately on that hand, which  
" alone can attune the finer movements, and exalt the  
best conceptions of the soul." Before we go on to consider the rest of the Doctor's bombast, and unmeaning jargon, it may be observed, in point of composition, this passage is ridiculous, for the first two sentences ought to have been but one; but the composition is not even the worst of them; they are also *impious*, and *irreligious*. What are these ordinary duties of religion, that may be directed with tolerable advantage by human precept? Are there any duties of religion which Christ has not appointed, and concerning which he has not given express laws? If there is any religion, or any duties in that religion that are not to be found in the scriptures, they are binding upon no Christians. Both ordinary and extraordinary duties are plainly settled by the head of the church, and cannot be directed by any human precept. Had this divine not been a doctor, and a man of importance, he would have thought otherwise.

wife. The next sentence is almost intelligible.—  
 “ The harmonies of holy friendship, like the sublimer contemplations of the divinity, must depend more immediately on that hand, which can alone attune the finer movements, and exalt the best conceptions of the soul.” This is truly bombast.—It is further added:—“ It will be likewise understood, that in the society you choose to frequent, you will seek for the stile of virtue which is most adapted to the turn of your own mind. But this last propensity should not, I apprehend, be indulged too far. I will explain myself (and a very curious explanation it is) The more intimate RECIPROCATIONS of a close friendship, are now, as you know, out of the question. The Doctor needed not to have given the young women any advice concerning following any stile that is suited to their own minds; for this they will pursue rather too far, unless some restraint be laid upon them, by the influence of reason and religion. Whatever societies either *old* or *young women choose to frequent*, they ought to seek for that stile of virtue which is pointed out by the word of God, and not that which is adapted most to their own minds. A few romping heathen girls may follow the Doctor’s directions; but young women who observe the doctrines of Christ and his apostles, will choose that stile of virtue, that is most consistent with the express dictates of the divine word. When doctors want to say a fine thing, they are ready to say more than is consistent with truth, and when they intend to break out upon us with all the effulgence of their own importance, they are ready to  
 fly



fly so high, that they soar out of the sight of both themselves and all others. INTIMATE RECIPRO-CATIONS, are far from being very plain, and many young women must go to their dictionaries before they can possibly understand the meaning of Fordyce's *reciprocations*. Instead of pursuing this subject any farther. I must refer the reader to Solomon's character of a virtuous woman, which will suit either an *old* or a *young woman*, and is given in the purest descriptive style that ever was practised upon the subject \*.

The next thing that we shall consider, and with which we shall conclude this discourse, is the *use* and *abuse* of oratory in religious discourses. This, by some, is considered as very important, and it is so.—To speak plain, and to speak well, are very necessary qualifications in a religious orator. The first thing necessary upon this head is, that the orator speak truth; that what he says be consistent with the pure and undefiled word of God.—And the second thing necessary is, that the truth be so *regularly connected*, and *plainly spoken*, that every one who has common sense may understand it, provided they give attention. All compound words that are not *universally* known and understood, ought to be avoided, and all vulgar phrases, that are not to be found in scripture, ought to be industriously shunned. There can be no good speaking, without arrangement of sentiments, if the pronunciation be never so good, and the voice never so clear; without a just arrangement every discourse is a mere ferrago of words jumbled together, without order.

Long and tedious sentences are also improper; these weary the attention, and render a discourse dull; the consequence of which is, the audience fall asleep. Short sentences, provided they are plain, are more entertaining than *tedious periods*, or a *long connection of semicolons and colons*, in the same sentence. The subject indeed will have a great influence upon the practice in this matter. Grave subjects, and argumentative discourses will require longer sentences than mere descriptions and preceptive discourses. Narrations will require a middle, between both. A speaker, who does not consider the nature of his subject, will ramble at random, and not know well how to apply these rules. He will therefore be *confused, obscure, and unintelligible*.

A just connection of divine truths *well arranged*, and *expressed*, is edifying and agreeable. What is well expressed to the ear, is then also entertaining to the judgement and understanding, and the mind is satisfied as well as the senses. A good pronunciation, without being joined with true connection, and a proper arrangement of ideas and words, is a mere abuse of oratory. Mere sound will never make an orator, for articulation is *vox praterea & nihil, a mere empty sound*. Eloquence, practised in religious discourses is abused when the speaker declaims with an intention to move the passions, without first addressing the understanding, or informing the judgement. Of this sort are the greatest part of those religious orations delivered by the preachers in Moor-Fields and Tottingham-Court, or at the Foundery. The most part of these orators are serious about *trifles*, and vehement about things of  
very

*very little importance.* Instead of attempting to persuade men to embrace truth, by setting forth its charms, they deal damnation around them with so much fury, that one would think, that instead of being messengers of peace, they were sent as messengers of vengeance, to curse the greatest part of mankind. Such preachers practise a kind of eloquence, which may truly be called the oratory of the lungs; for it consists chiefly of vociferation, and an intemperate voice, when there is nothing spoken that is any way to the purpose. Good speaking consists of true sentiments, elegantly expressed in their natural and proper order, with proper accents, and right pronunciation. And this may be performed in any language that a speaker is master of. Fine sentiments, ill expressed, ought not to be despised, but they will never please so well as when the words are suited to the matter. But the finest cadence will never entertain a judicious audience, without sentiment, arrangement, and order. As for gesture in speaking upon religious matters, it ought to be decent and animated. A preacher ought neither to stand like a statue, nor dance like a mountebank; he ought to suit his motion to the nature of his subject, and always enter into the spirit of what he delivers. To speak of interesting truths, without real concern, argues want of feeling, and to shew immoderate concern in uttering trifles, argues a want of sense and true judgment.

In words and gestures *decency* and *propriety* ought always to be observed. Every speaker that thinks justly, and feels what he utters, will without learning and art, have a gesture suitable to his subject,



and never be disagreeable; where there is a want of *judgment* and *real feeling*, a speaker will attempt to make up this defect, by a sort of *forced vociferation*, and *absurd gestures*. Many instances might be given of this absurd accident of our modern pulpit eloquence. Almost all extempore speakers, who do not study their discourses before they deliver them, are guilty, less or more, of absurdities in gesture. Some hesitate, at particular periods of discourse, what they shall speak, and stand like immoveable statues, while others pursue their line of oration so rapidly, that they run themselves out of breath, and appear fatigued with their harrangue. The greatest part of all these *absurd gestures*, and *forced attitudes*, are chiefly to be met with among those preachers who are totally unlearned, or among those who, for the sake of being popular, are ashamed of no *absurdity*. Wherever you find *sober, learned, and religious* ministers, you will never find much impropriety in their pulpit gestures.

There is an abuse of oratory in religious discourses, when the speaker endeavours to entertain his audience with suspicious stories, received from second-hand, destitute of a sufficient degree of probability to render them credible. This may be called the oratory of *story-telling*, which is a *disgrace* to the pulpit, and a most shocking imposition upon the *ears* and *time* of an audience. There are no specimens of this sort of eloquence in the scriptures. The prophets and apostles never practised this method. When they reported historical facts, they produced their authority, and shewed indisputable proofs

proofs of the things that they reported; but never told stories to illustrate their discourses, from the authority of persons they did not know, or whose varacity was suspicious. This absurd practice was almost forgotten in these kingdoms, till it was revived by Mess. *Whitfield* and *Wesley*, about 38 years ago. Since that time, such orators as meant to gain acceptance with the populace, have made it their study to muster a regiment of stories in all their discourses, which, though they are quite problematical, yet, because they are marvellous, are greedily received. Upon the same principles that ignorant men receive these stories, the absurd accounts of *witches*, *ghosts*, and *goblins*, have been received in many parts of the world. The vulgar, in all ages, have been fond of things marvellous, and nothing pleases the ears better than *strange* and *improbable relations* of marvellous things.— These are easily retained in the memory, because they are suited to an early prejudice, that most of people have received from their *parents* and *nurses*. In the holy scriptures, we have the best examples of all sorts of religious eloquence; and ministers of the word of truth ought to conform thereto, as much as is within the compass of their power. In so doing they will never say a mean, or an unsuitable thing. By studying that pure foundation of truth they will find all the various forms of speaking necessary to be used, to *instruct*, *persuade*, *reprove*, or *correct* mankind. They will find no occasion to rake the *kennels of uncertain tradition*, to find things necessary to entertain the imaginations of an audience, nor will they find it necessary to climb the  
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heights of *natural science*, to find beautiful images or figures of speech. They will find all things necessary for true eloquence recorded in the Bible.— From *Moses, and the prophets in all the scriptures*, they will find a continual fund of *sentiments, words, and expressions* necessary for their purpose. I have made this digression to shew, that the holy scriptures are not only the foundation of all our religion, in point of truth, but that also in all things pertaining to excellency in religious oratory, and composition of discourses. And that all things necessary to make a discourse noble, grand, and sublime, may be found in the word of God.



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## LECTURE XIX.

*Concerning the Origin and Propagation of  
Light, &c. according to MOSES.*

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GENESIS i. 3, 4, 5.

*And God said, let there be light: and there was light.*

*And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*

*And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night: and the evening and the morning were the first day.*

**I**T is reasonable to suppose, that when God created the heavens and the earth, he gave existence to all the several elements which now compose this world, and all the other systems that are connected therewith. What is termed chaos, or the abyfs, seems to have consisted of all the various principles of matter which were at first without order, and particular arrangement. The Hebrew word *bara*, in this part of the writings of Moses, signifies, to give being to what before was non-existent; *jazar* points out the forming of specifical creatures into their particular classes, and *asba* denotes the making all things perfect in their kind.

The first distinct creature that Moses takes notice of, is *light*; which, he informs us, was created by  
the

the commandment of the Almighty. He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast. We have reason to conclude, from Scripture, that the visible fabric of the heavens and the earth were not the first works of God; for *the angels, these sons of the Almighty, these morning stars*, sang for joy, when the foundations of this system were laid. It is altogether uncertain how long that spiritual system had stood before this world was created, but it is highly probable, and almost certain, that there was a spiritual system before this world was formed in the manner it now is.

It appears very probable, that all the moving powers in nature received their existence when the matter, of which the heavens and the earth are made, were first created. This is called by Moses the abyss, or *matter without form, or order*.—When the Almighty said let there be light, we are not to imagine that this fiat was the cause of the creation of the principles of light: the materials were already created, but this command called them into another form than they were in before. The chaotic mass contained the *principles and materials* of all bodies, but without order. So Moses tells us, that all things were *tohu ve-bohu*,—*void*, without *form*, and that darkness was over all the abyss.

The divine commandment which produced light, must be considered as operating upon the properties of matter already created, and as light is found to proceed from the motion of luminous particles, we must conceive some central force or attracting power to be the instrument of producing this phenomenon of light. There seems to be moving  
principles

principles in all nature, which, when put in motion by the first cause, produce natural effects according to fixed and established laws; which cannot be altered, unless by the first mover.

The origin of that light which now renders bodies visible to us, seems chiefly to be fire, though light and fire are not inseparably connected; for light may be propagated where there is no fire, as from putrid bodies,—and fire may be where there is no light, as in iron, sulphur, &c.

According to Moses, light was the first specific creature that was formed in this system, but the materials were already created when the other matter, of which the heavens and the earth were formed, received their existence. Moses seems plainly to hint at the operation of a principle in the universe, which, as a second cause, produced the phenomenon of light. This, most probably, was the motion of the luminous and fiery particles in the chaotic mass, which, by a law of nature, separated themselves from the other gross materials of the miscellaneous composition, and by an attractive sympathy associated in one body, and, in the space of three natural days, formed that body which we now call the SUN.

Whether there is any subtile body, of a purer nature than fire, in this system, is of little consequence in this enquiry; for, admitting that similar particles have, according to their nature, a quality or power to attract one another when put in motion, it answers all the purposes required. The first thing that Moses takes notice of in the order of the things created, is the center of this system,



which he calls *aor*, or light ; and which, after a short progression, rested in the sun, the common center of this system of which we are a part.

By the influence of this central *light*, or *fire*, the various parts of the system were balanced, and, by *mutual attraction*, moved in the expanse at determined distances. The proportion of an attracting force in every body makes it tend towards its center ; and, in moving bodies, makes them move round it, so that by the power of gravitation, as a sort of sympathetic force, all bodies in motion move round their center, at such distances, as their proportion of matter requires. Light, which is only an association of lucid or igneous particles of matter, naturally forms itself by motion into a spherical shape ; and therefore, in moving around its axis, for the space of twenty-four hours, would naturally, in relation to different parts of the chaotic mass, produce the phenomena of evening and morning, even before there was any sun. Three revolutions of this light, or of that part of the mass of matter which formed this globe, would naturally issue in the fourth day, when the Almighty Creator gave the body of light a systematical appointment to rest in the body of the sun.

The account which Moses gives of the abyss, or deep, as it is called in our translation, is very favourable to the idea which Sir Isaac Newton has suggested concerning attraction and gravitation ; for the Hebrew word signifies *to move with a sort of confused motion*. This shews that the chaotic mass had some gravitating powers in it before the forming of this system ; and that the attracting and repelling

pulling forces were naturally and originally in the universe ;—and that the First Mover gave them in a regular course, their specifical direction, and systematical attractions. Thus I imagine that the doctrine of Moses, even in point of philosophy, is much more agreeable to the system of Sir *Isaac Newton* than that of Mr *Hutchison*; and, it does not appear that there is any thing said by Moses that contradicts our great *natural philosopher*, or any thing that he has said that is not consistent with the *principia of Moses*.

As light is a *fluid*, composed of *lucid particles*, of which many are of an *igneous* nature, and have the power of burning, and others give light without having any *fire* in their composition; these all act according to their different *attractions*, or *gravitation*. When *lucid igneous particles* are strongly attracted to one another in great quantities, their heat becomes intolerable, and is capable of destroying the most solid bodies. It is well known that the rays of light, converged in the *focus* of one of *Hartsoeker's* burning glasses, will produce wonderful effects. Tin, lead, or any soft metal, dissolve at the first touch, and iron, which endures a very strong fire before it dissolves, will melt before one of these glasses in a *minute's time*. This plainly shews us, that, provided there were not a *wise* and *almighty* Providence, that manages and directs all things, those materials which are of the greatest advantage to the world, would soon destroy it. If the rays of light were to form solid bodies, and depart from their state of fluidity, they would, in

the twinkling of an eye, reduce this globe to ashes, or render it a liquid fire.

Were the rays of light all of one kind, it is probable that they might unite, and become solid bodies; but the wisdom of Providence has formed them both of different colours, and of different *reflections* and *refrangibility*. This prevents them from associating in such a manner as to do hurt, unless they are converged by some instrument which hinders them from flying off. As all rays of light have not the same degree of *reflexibility*, or *refrangibility*, but some are capable of greater *reflections* and *refractions* than others, they cannot without force be united in one solid body, though they are all serviceable for the purposes of light, and contribute to the happiness of men, and the welfare of all living creatures. Whether Moses intended a philosophical account of light in this chapter I will not pretend to say; but one thing is certain, that he makes use of a word which points out some of the principal properties of light. *Aor*, signifies that body which renders objects visible, which we call light; it also signifies fire, and perhaps Moses intended to point out in one word, what in our language requires two, *light* and *fire*. Whatever may be the philosophic differences between these two, we are certain that they are seldom separated; for where the one is the other may be found. It is also plain that the sun is not the sole source of light, more than he is of fire; for light may be propagated where the sun never shines, as may be proved by many instances. All bodies, in which  
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there is fire, will also produce light; but the sun is the principal source of light to our system.

As there is no body in all the creation more useful than light, so there are none of more extraordinary qualities, and more wonderful in their characters. In the rays of light are discovered all the original colours in nature, *red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet*; and that the quantity of colour in light is in the same proportion as the seven musical notes, or intervals of sound in an octave \*. From experiments it is found, that those rays of light are of the largest quantity that paint the brightest colours, and, of all these, the red rays have the least refrangibility. Light is it itself wonderful, but its use to the world is beyond all expression. It discovers to man and beast objects of pleasure, the means of life; without it motion would be dangerous, and rest insipid. True are the words of the Hebrew philosopher, *light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.*

There has been a violent dispute between the philosophers on the continent and those in England, concerning the propagation of light. The first make light a fluid, of a most subtile, fine, and active substance, dispersed over all the world, which affects our eyes, when it is carried towards them, by the impression of a body in fire †. The latter affirm, that corporeal light is a substance which the body in fire emits out of itself with the utmost rapidity;

\* Sir Isaac Newton's Optics, Book I. Part II. Pro. III.

† History of the Heavens.

rapidity ; for instance, every fourth, or at least every third, which is the second of a minute. Sir Isaac Newton has demonstrated this latter opinion by so many wonderful experiments, that it is impossible to deny the propagation of light, without being devoted to scepticism. The author of *Spectacle de la Nature* has endeavoured to shew the impossibility of the motion of light according to Sir Isaac's experiments, but his reasons given for this impossibility are frivolous, and whimsical. He wants to set Moses and Newton at variance, when they are perfectly agreed. The Abbe imagines that the sun by this time would have been exhausted, provided he had emitted such a quantity of rays, or particles of light, as Sir Isaac's system supposes to proceed from that luminary ; for he affirms that the sun is but a mere point, in comparison of the quantity of light that must have issued from him during the space of six thousand years. There might be some probability in the Abbe's supposition, provided that one part of nature was not formed to supply another, and that actual experiments did not every day prove the truth of Sir Isaac's doctrine. If experiments and matters of fact convince our senses, I see no reason why we should suppose, that what our senses really perceive is contrary to reason, because we do not know what is the *pabulum solis*, or the nutriment of the sun. If it is still capable to be demonstrated by undoubted experiments, that light really comes and moves from the sun, and the sun still remains the same, all that is necessary to be supposed is, that the author of nature has found a constant supply for that luminary

menary from some source of nature, which we have not yet discovered. Mr Romer's observations upon the eclipses of Jupiters Satellites has put this matter beyond all reasonable doubt; and Sir Isaac Newton has proved clearly in his *Optics*, that the rays of light take about seven minutes in their passage from the sun to our earth.

The Abbe Pluche has shewed us that air is undestructible, as he calls it, or a substance of the *semperidem* kind, but that is as far as it is within the reach of our earth, but how did he know, but that this invariable substance, when carried through other regions might not become pabulum to the sun, and be a perpetual feeder, to that body of fire. Experience teaches us, that fire throws out all bodies, except air, but readily receives this body at all times, and why may not air pass through the higher regions and enter into the body of the sun, and receive a new character?

What he says with regard to the wind gun, only proves, that the air within, or the atmosphere retains its elasticity, and is uncorruptible, and it is on this account, the better fitted to be the pabulum of fire,—which, though it may change its character, may continue to be a substantial supply to other elements of nature. Whatever may be in these matters, it does appear from all that the Abbe has said, that the principia of Moses, and that of Sir Isaac Newton, are in the least different with regard to light; both of these writers allow light to be created by the Almighty, and to be managed by his Providence. And both of them agree in supposing gravitating powers in this system. Sir Isaac allows  
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the source of light to be created by God, but the rays which supply our system with illumination to be propagated mechanically, according to certain laws of nature, established by the great Creator.

But not to pursue disputes concerning this wonderful creature light, I shall proceed to point out some of its properties, that my audience may thereby admire the great Creator of the universe, both for favouring us with light, and preserving us from several of its powers.

One blessed effect of light is, that it makes things visible to us; is the medium through which we perceive objects visible, and know how to use many of them. It is owing to light that we are enabled to behold the wonderful works of the Almighty, to learn knowledge from the things he has made.—Without this marvellous blessing of divine goodness, this world would be an inhospitable wilderness, and all that is in it lumber to us.—But by means of light we see to walk, to read, and contemplate the marvellous works of a kind and merciful Creator. The advantages of light are so numerous, and yet so well known, that it would be superfluous to mention them in detail. The peasant is in this respect almost as wise as the philosopher. It is, however, by the means of light that the philosopher can see his Creator in those works that the naked eye cannot behold; he can, by the means of glasses, through the medium of light, descry worlds that were undiscovered before, and explore systems that would have for ever lain concealed. By the instrumentality of this precious creature men can travel by sea  
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and land, and bring riches and wealth from all quarters of the globe.

But there is a property in light that is most awful. The rays of this body, which renders things visible, are also capable of destroying the whole world.— Light can produce fire of the most terrible kind. It can even melt bodies of the most solid natures in an instant of time. It will burn wet wood in a moment, vitrify bricks, and pumice stones, and dissolve earthen vessels full of water, and plume allum, which will bear the fire of the hottest glass-houses without alteration, is melted by rays of light in a glass in an instant. Yea gold, that resists the force of common fire, is soon liquified by the rays of light, converged in a burning glass. Were there not an over-ruling Providence to direct this wonderful body, how soon might it make the whole of this globe a liquid ocean of fire. Were the rays of light so to unite, as rain often does, and come from the sun in the quantity of hail, how soon would they consume the whole of this earth? What a mercy is it, that our atmosphere has none of the qualities of a burning glass to converge the rays of light, which are real particles of fire, of the hottest nature; for though all light is not fire, yet the greatest part of it, that we know, is nearly connected with it, and of the same quality.

But let us consider light in the quality of fire, or having the power of burning, how amazing is it, that the air, which is full of light and fire, does not scorch us to death? All the waters in the ocean could not quench some sort of fires, which actually exist in nature, provided they were once

actually kindled. We see often how dreadful a fire burns in the midst of a watery cloud, when it is pouring down in spouts from the heavens, and did not Providence over-rule those fires how soon would they consume the world? A very little application of art will convince any reasonable person, that a fire may be kindled that water cannot quench.—The filings of steel and sulphur mixed together, and kneaded into a dough with cold water, will, in a few hours take fire; and phosphorus will burn in the midst of water. But did the light come down as close to our earth as it is compacted near the sun, it would soon set all the waters a boiling, and melt the globe into a liquid fire. We see some sort of firey particles that can only be kindled by water, such as lime-stones, which, as soon as wet, burn and turn into actual fire, but are harmless enough when kept dry. What is more than all, there is reason to believe, that there is fire that will burn with or without air. There is a kind of phosphorus, which, if you put it into a bottle of water, a little warm, and place it in the receiver of an air pump, and exhaust all the air, will burn as well as in the open air, which shews that this fire will burn without air. What is remarkable of this sort of fire, it will lie five or six years under water, and when heated a little, or put in motion, will presently kindle; which shews, that fire may remain in cold water unextinguished, and may be produced on all occasions. We may truly say, with the apostle Peter, *seeing these things, are so! What manner of persons ought we to be?* Seeing all those things that are so absolutely necessary for our happiness and enjoy-



enjoyment, may be so easily turned to our destruction, we have no safety but in the favour of that God, which governs all things by his wisdom, power, and providence.

There is one special quality in the rays of light as they come from the sun, that they diverge, and consequently enlighten all bodies on all sides, and preserve earth from being burnt and consumed. The disposition of rays of light to be refracted in passing through one medium to another, is of singular service to mankind, for to this disposition of light we owe the evening and morning twilights, which are of singular service to both man and beast. Were the light of the sun to recede from us in a moment, we would be in palpable darkness all on a sudden, which would be very disagreeable; and were the sun all in an instant to break forth upon us, in the midst of darkness, it would destroy our sight in a short time. But by his light receding and approaching gradually, our eyes are prepared for the reception of his splendour, which we are more enabled to bear, as it comes upon us gradually. Herein is the wisdom of our Creator manifested, that he makes all things contribute to our happiness, by certain laws, without which, they would do us real injury, and be hurtful instead of being profitable.

There is another thing that pertains to light, and that is, that it can be reflected by other bodies; without this disposition all the other properties of light would be of no more service to us, than to those that are born blind. Had not bodies the faculty of reflecting light, and were not light capable

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of being reflected, there would arise little benefit therefrom to mankind.

It does not appear that reflected light, when collected in a burning-glass, has any heat; at least the light of the sun, when reflected from the moon, has no heat. For though the light is greatly encreased by means of the glass, there is no heat at all to be found from the increase of light. This is attended with advantages to the world in general, especially in hot countries; for if the rays of the moon afforded heat like the rays of the sun, some parts of the habitable world would be burnt up,—since the descending dews of the night, by which it is moistened, would then cease to fall, and the fire of the moon would draw its vapours upwards. If the rays of the moon were to succeed in heat to the rays and heat of the sun, it is easy to perceive how hurtful it would be to the health of mankind, especially in warm climates. But Providence has ordered all things well, and has, by means of the moon, transmitting by reflection a part of the sun's light, without any of his heat, that the inhabitants might have the benefit of light without any injury to their health, or persons. We may truly say with the inspired writer, *O Lord thy works are wonderful, in wisdom thou hast made them all!*

When we consider the words of Moses, it appears evident that what is in our version called light, is in the Hebrew rather something that sends forth light. *Aor* may signify any thing that makes things visible by emitting particles of light, and sometimes comprehends rain, or what is in the clouds, or air. The word *air* very properly comes from *aer*, which,  
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if read by founding the *aleph*, will found *aur*, which is not much different from *air* in the found. When the Almighty said let there be *aur*, it is not certain that he meant elementary fire, or original unpropagated light. It is more probable that he intended by that word, a body that sent forth light by means of the motion of similar particles of luminous and igneous matter, which was produced by the gravitating or attracting forces that is originally in all matter ; which, after being formed into a systematic state, might emit rays of light to illuminate the system to which it belonged.

But what may put it beyond doubt to any reasonable people, that light is propagated in some time is, that considering the distance of the sun from our earth, yet the heat thereof is felt by us at that distance, which is not probable would ever have happened, if the rays of light did not descend. Moreover, if the sun was a fiery shining body, whose rays could not be refracted and reflected, he would effectually consume the systems that were within reach of his ordinary heat, and this world among the rest.

According to Moses, it was by light, or the motion thereof, that time has been measured ; for the first day commenced with light, and must relate to some motion of this phenomenon, otherwise evening and morning would have no meaning ; for Moses speaks of light, and its effects, in the same manner before the creation of the sun as after he was formed ; which shews that the body of light measured time by some regular motion, as well before the sun was formed, as after. It cannot be  
much



much doubted that there was some moving principle in this body, which continued to keep it in its course, till having, by so many revolutions, emerged from all the dregs of the chaotic mass, it shone forth brightly in the character it now sustains. The astronomers, for the most part, begin their reckoning from the day the sun and moon was formed, but they ought to begin with the creation of light; for time was as exactly measured before the fourth day as it has been since.

When the light which we now enjoy was placed in the sun, and communicated to this world by the ministry of sun and moon, we find that Moses calls both the *sun* and *moon lights*, whereas it is well known that the moon has no light, except what is reflected, and comes from the sun.—The sun and moon are called two great lights, and are said to be placed in the expanse, for the government of days and years, night and day, and for the government of the stars. Our translators seems not to comprehend the ideas in the original. When they read, *he made the stars also*, they make use of a tautology, which the text does not admit of. The whole paragraph reads thus: *And God made two great luminaries, the greater luminary to rule the day, the lesser luminary to rule the night, and the stars.*

By the changes and variations of the moon, the different seasons among the Jews were regulated with regard to their religious feasts, and several other things; and it is by considering the revolution of the moon, as well as the sun, that our present chronology and calculation of time proceed. Therefore

fore the moon may be said to rule the night, and the stars, because the calculation of their motions and distances are in a great measure ascertained by the moon, and her eclipses. By divine appointment the moon is regent of the sky, and though there are many luminaries far greater than she, yet, with regard to this earth, she is the greatest in point of light, because she is nearest. She therefore rules the earth and the stars, by a special appointment of God, and will continue to do so till the end of time. It is not in my way to examine the various motions of the sun and moon, nor the causes and effects thereof. Let it suffice to observe, that light is one of the most useful creatures in this system for both man and beast. It both shews us all objects that are capable to be made visible, and by its motion measures our time, and teaches us to understand what is invisible, by shewing us what is visible.

Light is of all things the most necessary to the world, and, on account of its profitableness to all creatures, the most excellent things are compared to it. It has, in all languages, and in all countries, been made the symbol of some parts of the theology of the world. Many things in the Jewish and Christian religion are compared to light. The evangelist John, in his first epistle, compares God to light of the most perfect kind; for he says, *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Without light this world would be a scene of misery and wretchedness,—no actions could be performed with pleasure, nor could life endure long without light;—the universe would be a large dungeon without the  
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comfortable supply of that medium which renders objects visible. In like manner, without the enjoyment of God, all things would be uncomfortable, and mere life only a spending of existence, without enjoyment. The light of Jehovah's countenance is the true life and light of the sons of men, and is to the soul, what light is to our senses. The Almighty is called light, not only because he is the author thereof, but because all true mental illumination comes from him. It is the first thing which God formed in the new creation, as well as that which he formed first in order when he put this system into its present situation; he said, *let there be light, and there was light*. When men are brought out of a sinful condition, it is in Scripture called *bringing them out of darkness into God's marvelous light*. They are said to be in light when they see objects of sense clearly; and, with regard to their minds, they are said to be in *the light*, when they have clear and distinct *notions* and *perceptions* of God, and *divine things*. The pure in heart are said to see God, because they have the knowledge of his character, and understand his works and ways in a true and certain manner; sinners are said to walk in darkness, because they *know not God, as he has revealed himself*. Whether there is any created light calculated to be a medium to render spiritual bodies visible, I will not pretend to affirm positively, though I think it probable that there will be such a thing;—and that this pure and splendid medium, when all the dregs of darkness are purged away, will be sufficient to render spiritual things  
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visible to our senses, and that even *in our flesh we shall see God.*

Our Lord and Saviour is compared to light, because he makes the perfections of Deity visible to the mind, and even in the days of his flesh displayed all divine attributes and perfections to the world,—so that such as saw him are said to have seen the Father, because the glory which he displayed was the true glory of God. Hence he is called the light of the world, that lightens every man that comes into it. During all the days of his ministry here, he was constantly employed in making God known to men, and made it his study to communicate divine light to the world,—but, at his transfiguration, he exhibited a *visible light and glory* that mortal sight could not bear. This teaches us, that when this system of ours shall be purified from the dross of corruption, that there will be a more splendid and striking view of God made to his people, than they are *at present* able to bear. And that light, which is at present so wonderful and useful a creature, and so far beyond the comprehension of the wisest, will then be an object of sight, as well as the medium of vision. The present sun, though he makes objects visible, cannot be seen by the naked eye; his rays and splendour are too strong for our sight to endure;—but there is reason to conclude, that when our sight is purified from the gross mortality that we now carry about with us, that we shall be able to behold a more clear light than the meridian splendour of this glorious luminary.

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*my feet, and a lamp unto my path.*—*The entrance of thy word giveth light* \*. The information that the word of God gives to the world is light to the soul, and enlightens the understanding in the knowledge of things truly divine and excellent. The several doctrines of Scripture, like the rays of the sun, render things, that were before unseen, visible to the mind; and though God, who is the author of divine truth, cannot be fully perceived, more than the sun can be seen with the naked eye fully, yet those emanations of divine light make God known to us, as far as it is necessary that we should know him in our present situation. The Almighty, like the sun, is the source of all divine knowledge, or light, and his promises of grace and mercy, and the other truths contained in his word, are rays of divine light issuing from an infinite source, which is never exhausted, notwithstanding all the light which has been communicated. All the rays that have come from the sun have never lessened his light or influence to the world, and all the displays of divine truth have never lessened the fulness of the merciful fountain of all goodness.

But the gospel, which is a system of good news, is also compared to light, because it has revealed life and immortality;—life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. The full demonstration of an immortal state, and of the resurrection to eternal life, though recorded in the Old Testament, are yet more brightly displayed under the New Testament dispensation. Salvation and immortality by Jesus Christ are said to be brought to light by the

\* Psal. cxix. 105,—130, &c.

the gospel, because under the Old Testament they were expressed in more dark language, and were not so expressly pointed out in so many words.— But now he that runs may read them.

As almost all the noble and great things in religion are frequently compared to light, and especially the light of the sun, there is nothing in which the comparison holds more than in this,—that the very rays of the sun, that convey light to our world, also invigorate and quicken the other creatures of God; in like manner, the truths or rays of divine light, that proceed from the Son of Righteousness, not only enlighten the minds of the children of the Most High, but quicken and invigorate the affections with holy love and regard to the Almighty, and our Lord Jesus Christ. None have aversion to light, except those who love to do evil, or carry something about with them that will not bear inspection; and none have an aversion to the light of the truth, except such as love to live in sin, and to commit iniquity. This is a reason given by our Saviour why the Jews did not love the light of truth. He says, *they loved not to come to the light, lest their deeds should be made manifest; but loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* As corporeal light has a great influence upon the animal spirits, and gives them a sort of motion and spring that they have not in darkness, so the light of the word of God gives motion to the acts of the mind, and makes men more lively in pursuing the path of duty.

In the Mosiac account of the creation there is a distinct relation of all things in general that belong

to our system, in a very few words, and none of the doctrines of Moses, concerning the cosmogony of the world, is contrary to the principles of sound philosophy. The astronomy of Moses, when rightly understood, will be found to agree with that which is practised by the most strict Newtonians; and they will never find fault with Moses, but on account of not understanding him. Moses has clearly shewn the wisdom of the great Creator, in forming light, and putting the moving powers of the system in motion, before he formed man or beast, that there might be all things necessary for vegetation and life, before creatures that required the influence thereof were formed. No human wisdom could have contrived such a natural and beautiful order of creation as Moses has shewn us, by divine direction, where one thing was formed before another, just as reason and the nature of things required. Before any living creatures were formed, all things necessary for their subsistence were created; dry land for beasts and creeping things, the air, or the expanse for birds and fowls, the waters for fish, and all things for the service of man.

We are certainly much obliged to Moses, as a divine writer, for the information he has given us concerning the creation, by the inspiration of the spirit of God; for it is not certain that any experiment, without revelation, would have led us to the great Architect of the universe. The world by wisdom knew not God, and were never disposed, from all that they learned from his works, to admit his attributes. The greatest part of the ancient philosophers, who, though they were not altogether  
atheists,



atheists, but admitted a first cause, yet they never, by all their speculations, could tell positively, whether he was distinct from the universe, or only an universal power in nature. Moses puts this point beyond doubt, and informs us, that God made the world. The apostle to the Hebrews informs us of the same thing, and declares, *that it is by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things that are seen, are not made of things that do appear* \*. Philosophy may strengthen our conviction of creation and Providence, but without a revelation from heaven, could never have given us the first principles of them, nor fully satisfied our mind concerning the character of God, and his works.—*For though the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shews his handy works,*—there is such a bias in the minds of men to *infidelity*, that they through pride, pervert all objects of sense, to the dishonour of their maker.

Mankind are not so ready to fall into atheism as into infidelity, and the many disputes in the world concerning God have not been so much, that there is no God, as who is the true God; and upon this head it must be allowed, that there have been many controversies, and without Revelation, it would have been impossible to have determined them.—But we are fully certified thereby that there is a God, and truly informed who he is, and what he is, both to us and all his creatures. When he made this world he created light, that he might be seen in his works; but he did more, for he made man capable of knowing his God, and gave him a revelation of his character. We no sooner hear of the creation  
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\* Heb. ii. 1.

of man, than we hear of God conversing with, commanding, and giving him orders concerning all things that were subject unto him. He left him not to conjecture who made him, and all other things, by the mere light of nature, but spake to, and made himself known to the first man, by a language which he qualified him to understand. If ever any creature merely finite, was qualified to walk by the light of nature, the first man and woman certainly were; but God did not leave them to this weak guide, but favoured them with a revelation of *himself, his will, and all his works*. How highly ought we to prize divine revelation, which is of so much service to rational creatures, in all conditions of life. Revelation is a light which shews things more glorious and pleasant, than the light of the sun, moon, and stars; it leads our views to things invisible to sense, and realizes them to the mind. By this divine light we see in the midst of darkness, and when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death, we fear no evil. The sun and moon, and all other light will fail us, at least our sense in the use of them will fail, but the light of the word of God will shine in the midst of that darkness, and light us into a world of everlasting day;—where there will be no more need of the sun, or of the moon, for *there* God shall be our light, and our sun shall no more go down. Such reflections as these, after all philosophical discussions are ended, well afford an entertainment, that could never be derived from all the experiments that have ever yet been made upon mechanical principles. In researches of natural philosophy, let us, in the first place,

place submit its principles to the word of God; and make that useful science an hand-maid to scripture divinity, and we will certainly reap good fruit from our labours.

The two great lights mentioned by Moses, are said to be placed in the expanse of the heavens, which our translation erroneously renders firmament. What is meant by the expanse, is that wide extended space which appears around this earth, in which all the heavenly bodies move, in their appointed orders; the greatest part of that which appears to the naked eye is empty, and fit for solid bodies to move in. Were there not a vacuum we cannot conceive how the heavenly orbs could move in such a manner as they do, with so much rapidity and swiftness. Fluid, or liquid bodies, might, perhaps, slip past one another; but consolidated bodies, if meeting in strait lines, would hinder one another's motion; yea fluids going in strait lines, would also interrupt each other's motion, when they were of the same quality and quantity. Moses makes use of a word that signifies a *vacuum*; *bohu* signifies *mere emptiness*, and provided the verb *hajetah*, is supplied, which I see no reason why it may not, it will be a positive proof from Moses in favour of that part of the Newtonian philosophy, which maintains a vacuum. The words may read, *And the earth was an unformed THING, and a VACUUM and DARKNESS, was upon the face of the abyss.* This is a proof in point in behalf of a *vacuum*, and shews to us, that when the great globes were set in motion, they had *empty space* to move in, or *expanse*, where there was no materials to resist their motion. With regard to air, and some other things, though



though yet they may be considered as *resisting bodies*, as they move along with the parts of the system they belong to, they can never retard ~~the~~ motions of these moving bodies, unless they go out of their course, which is unnatural to suppose. It is a pity that the commentators upon the books of Moses had not been a little more careful in considering the *genius* of his writings, and they would have found that they not only informed us of things that we could not have discovered without them, but also mention nothing but what is *philosophically true*, in all thing that belongs to *cosmogony*. Writers that are fond of mystery, take pleasure in supposing what Moses has neither meant nor express'd, and has annexed uncommon, as well as unnatural, significations to his words. But when the genius of his words, and their simple meaning, are considered, they will, to all impartial readers, appear exceedingly plain. Had such a genius as Sir Isaac Newton examined the Mosic cosmogony as accurately as he did many other thing, there is little doubt but he would have found the whole theory thereof consistent with his own experiments. Two of his favourite points are plainly hinted by Moses, viz. *a vacuum*, and *gravitation*; without which, the rest of his system, would be like *the baseless fabric of a vision*. The sober part of this great man's followers, will, I hope, not be displeased to find, that his marvellous system of philosophy, has such a good foundation as the written word of God. Infidels, who have sometimes branded the cosmogony of Moses with absurdity, ought to be silent, till once they read his works carefully in the original, and they will perhaps find good reasons for changing  
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their opinion, and agreeing with this divine amanensis. Many draw too hasty conclusions concerning certain doctrines, before they have taken pains to understand them, and determine positively, without being able to give any just reason for their conclusions. But this is unfair, and a very improper method to attain to true knowledge.

The Almighty, by Moses, has not only informed us that he made the universe, but also condescended to teach us, concerning the moving powers that he has placed in it, as second causes to this phenomena which we daily observe; and philosophers, whether they will allow it or not, are obliged to Deity for the very first principles upon which they proceed. Divines are also much obliged to *judicious philosophers*, for a method of investigating the secondary principles of truth, calculated to lead men to the Author of all good. For without the assistance of this *fair hand maid, philosophy*, teachers will reason very imperfectly upon some subjects of divine revelation. Whoever has read Mr Ray's Wisdom of God in the Creation, Derham's Physico—and Astro Theology, and Newentyt's Religious Philosopher, will be convinced how much we are obliged to philosophers for many arguments against infidels, and for defending the authority of revelation.—What a poor figure do many teachers make in supporting the cause of revelation, when they for the most part do not speak from their own knowledge, but are merely the echo of some *secondary organ*, which they understand as little as they do the primary source of knowledge. Since *new and easy* methods of investigating truth have been pretended

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to be discovered, and manuals of all branches of learning are so ready at hand, lazy people, to save themselves from drudgery, have *picked upon the surface*, without ever proceeding to the true knowledge of science, which is only attained by study and perseverance. Abridgments almost of all subjects are now to be found provided by the book-sellers, for those who have not patience to take time to learn, and the full demonstration of truth is never looked after. Had our ancestors been as idle as we their children are, we would have had by this time very few assistances, to have helped us forward in the acquisition of knowledge. The study of the scriptures is accounted an easy one, and according to the way it is in general pursued, it must be confessed that there is not much trouble in it, but those that intend to understand it clearly, must do more than make it an occasional study. In those flimsy times there are many who pretend to teach others who cannot even read the translation of the Bible, who if they were asked the meaning of some words they pretend to explain, they could not tell what it was. It is a thing that every one may observe in experience, that instead of their being an increase of learning and knowledge in general, there is a manifest decline of all taste for study, and the means of knowledge. Even the common people are more ignorant than their fathers were, and provided they can obtain what is necessary for the body, they are indifferent concerning the entertainments of the mind.

Some pious and religious people cry out against learning and study as a dangerous thing to religion  
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and value themselves in proportion as they are ignorant of all kinds of science. But this hatred proceeds from their unwillingness to be at the pains to acquire knowledge by the means of study, which they find would encroach upon their pleasures or their ease. But I would ask any artists whatsoever, whether, without teaching or study, they were ever able to excel in any one profession. A limner, before he can excel in either portrait or historical painting, must both study and practise the art, before he can produce a good piece, that will abide the examination of a master. He may attain to the skill of painting a sign-post, perhaps with little study, but if he intends to furnish a finished performance, he must study the art in its several branches, before he can excel. It is so with all other studies, and with religion likewise. Yet what is strange, the most of men imagine that a competency of religious knowledge is, above all others, the easiest obtained, at least they are soonest satisfied therewith. There is one thing that is probably the reason of this, in our times, namely, that some men pretend to an immediate intercourse with the Deity, and receive at first hand, what costs other men a great deal of labour. This they call the teaching of the spirit. All the effusions of their disordered imaginations they father upon the Holy Ghost, and whatever they dream they affirm that it comes from God. Thus, they weave a spider's web of hypocrisy, and deceive themselves, by thinking they are wise, when they are really fools. Did such men give any better specimens of their knowledge than others are able to do, or could they work miracles, we would



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be more ready to admit their inspiration; but while they remain *ignorant, proud, haughty and vain*, can any person believe that they have intercourse with the Almighty? Their attempting to do what they are not qualified for performing, is a sure evidence that they are *to all good works reprobate*.

With regard to all persons who are public teachers, the best proof of their understanding religion, so as to be able to teach it is, their being able to compose a religious discourse, from revelation, according to the meaning of that divine system; for we may be sure, if a person cannot write a discourse that will abide reading, he will not be able to deliver one that will abide hearing. In composing a discourse, a man has time to deliberate, and think, *to digest*, and *arrange* his ideas; his judgment will then be better known than when he utters extempore effusions, that are nothing more than *occasional rapsodies*, proceeding from the imagination. The people in general have an aversion against reading of sermons, but if they knew how many of those that are not read are acquired, they would be as much against the one as the other. A preacher, who has a whole week upon his hand, and does not compose any of his discourse, must either steal it from some others, or serve the Lord with that which costs him nothing. I have made this digression to shew the necessity of study and learning to all public teachers of religion.



# ERRATA.

Page 104, note, for *exrapto*, read *ex ripto*.

In the last line of the Latin note, for *reliquita* read *reliquit*

Page 105, line 3, note, for *abute congeffos* read *altaque congeffos*.

Page 172, Hebrew note, for *Afker* read *Afber*.

Page 265 l. 14. 17. 27. for *Cannaan* read *Canaan*, and every where, where it is thus printed.

Page 104, l. 2, note, for *gratra* read *gratia*.

There are several literal escapes that the reader will easily perceive and correct, which would be of little service among errata:

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